

## Shaping Heroic Virtue

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# Shaping Heroic Virtue

*Studies in the Art and Politics of Supereminence in  
Europe and Scandinavia*

*Edited by*

Stefano Fogelberg Rota and Andreas Hellerstedt



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# Introduction

*Andreas Hellerstedt and Stefano Fogelberg Rota*

The articles in this volume are the result of discussions between the eight authors during five workshops (2011–2013) at Stockholm University, the Swedish Institute in Rome and at Lund University. The workshops were organized by a network funded by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (Riksbankens jubileumsfond), and were led by the editors, Stefano Fogelberg Rota and Andreas Hellerstedt. The participants were scholars working on a wide range of topics, from Late Ancient philosophy to late eighteenth-century literature, and depart from different fields within the humanities: philosophy, history, theology, history of ideas, comparative literature and art history. The different perspectives represented, and the inherently interdisciplinary character of these discussions, had a common origin and theme: the concept of heroic virtue and its development from its first expression in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (VII.1.1). The philosopher describes it as a virtue opposed to bestiality (*thêriotês*) and standing beyond us, a heroic and somehow divine virtue. Aristotle gives no further explanation of this disposition and while he refers to the example of Hector in Homer's *Iliad*, he promises to return to the subject on a later occasion. The briefness of Aristotle's description is inversely balanced by the richness of references to a superhuman virtue found during Late Antiquity, throughout the Middle Ages and Early Modern times and up to the late eighteenth century, on the eve of the collapse of the ancien régime.

The primary purpose of this volume, and the discussions that preceded it, is to outline the history of the reception of the idea of heroic virtue through a number of representative examples. *Shaping Heroic Virtue* is not the first book on the subject. Our aim is to provide an account of the reception and adaptation of the concept of heroic virtue over time in a variety of different contexts and genres through a selection of examples. This is something that is not found in previous research. Another important intention in the texts presented is to emphasize the political use of the concept of heroic virtue, which has been very much neglected in previous studies.

The concept of heroic virtue first appears in Book Seven of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Book Seven as a whole is dedicated primarily to a discussion of self-control or self-mastery (*enkrateia*) and its opposite, the lack of self-control, or unrestraint (*akrasia*). However, in the introduction to the book, the philosopher defines three categories of negative character traits: vice (*kakia*),

lack of self-control (*akrasia*) and beastliness (*thêriotês*). He also mentions the positive opposing traits: virtue, self-control and (as the opposite of beastliness) a form of superhuman virtue, which is described as both “heroic” and “divine”. Aristotle gives what seems to be an example of this heroic virtue, quoting a couple of lines of the *Iliad*, where King Priam praises Hector as seeming more like a son of gods than of mortals.

Aristotle continues to consider the idea of beastliness a little further in the fifth chapter of Book Seven. Self-control (and lack thereof) is discussed throughout the whole book, while virtue and vice are of course major themes in the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Oddly enough, the category that seems to correspond to the very peak of human excellence—indeed, it is described as divine—is the one about which Aristotle speaks the least.

It is no wonder then, that heroic virtue was a concept that caught the attention of many later readers. Perhaps the fact that Aristotle did *not* discuss the subject in great detail made it more useful to later generations. Here was a grand idea hinted at by the great philosopher, only waiting to be explained, commented upon and put to good use. The very words that make up heroic virtue definitely have something majestic and awe-inspiring about them, even though the term itself was almost empty.

### Heroic Virtue in the Middle Ages

The term *virtus heroica* was introduced into medieval Latin through the first complete translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is attributed to Robert Grosseteste (c.1175–1253). This meant that heroic virtue found a place in scholastic terminology and became a technical term in its own right, which philosophers and theologians started to feel a need to explain and comment upon. Many scholastic philosophers wrote significant commentaries or questions on the subject. In general, heroic virtue took on a more Christian form in medieval theology. Only the most prominent philosophers will be mentioned here: Albertus Magnus, Albertus’ pupil Thomas Aquinas and Jean Buridan. Besides these figures, there were many others who discussed heroic virtue, and there was a significant amount of disagreement around such issues as whether it was a question of natural virtue only, or if heroic virtue was to be considered supernatural (God-given), the precise relationship of heroic virtue to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, whether it constituted a particular species of virtue in its own right, or if it represented the common cardinal or theological virtues in a higher degree, and so forth.

Albertus Magnus is a good example of the continued importance of the Neoplatonist influence on the idea of heroic virtue as it evolved in the tradition of Christian theology. In Albertus's view, heroic virtue is reason's complete annihilation of the passions. It is a perfect virtue, which makes man like God, and consequently the highest form of it can only be achieved in heaven. According to Albertus, heroic virtue resembles more a form of self-control (*enkrateia, continentia*) in the highest degree, than a virtue in Aristotle's meaning of the word. Aristotle would most likely have understood all virtue to mean the active involvement of the passions, not just the suppression of them. It is reasonable to conclude, as Costa has done, that Albertus made use of the concept of heroic virtue in this way to be able to present the decidedly Christian virtue of continence as a superhuman, divine virtue.<sup>1</sup> Although in philosophical terms this represents something of a departure from the Aristotelian tradition, this view was nevertheless highly influential within Christian theology, and later proved especially important within Catholicism.

Thomas Aquinas's contribution to the development of the concept of heroic virtue was of great importance, even though he did not actually write extensively on the subject. In his commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he considers heroic virtue in the light of Aristotle's moral philosophy as a whole, and he follows Aristotle more closely than Albertus had done regarding the worldly virtues. Thomas describes man as standing between animals and pure spirit. He is capable of sinking down to the level of animals, but also rising to approach pure spirit through the use and dominance of his reason over the irrational part of the soul, and heroic virtue is an example of a perfect form of such dominance.

However, Thomas seems to have used the term heroic virtue slightly differently in different contexts. In the *Summa theologiae*, he used the idea to illustrate a central theological idea, the so-called gifts of the Holy Spirit and their relation to human virtue, although he never intended it to replace the

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1 Jacopo Costa, "Heroic Virtue in the Commentary Tradition on the Nicomachean Ethics in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200–1500*, István Bejczy (ed.), Brill Studies in Intellectual History 160 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 156–160; Rudolf Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend: Geschichte und Inhalt eines theologischen Begriffes*. Münchener Studien zur historischen Theologie, Heft 12 (München: Verlag Josef Kösel & Friedrich Puster, 1933), 36–40; Risto Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica: 'Held' und 'Genie' als Begriffe des christlichen Aristotelismus," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 33 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 97; Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage der individualistischen Ethik im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, Jan A. Aerntsen and Andreas Speer (eds.), (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), 453–454.

theological terminology as such. Heroic virtue, he argues, is the result of the cooperation of the gifts (*dona Spiritus Sancti*) and human effort, and, in particular, normal human virtue. The gifts make it possible for man to achieve a divine virtue, through them virtue is perfected. Regular virtue makes man competent to perform human actions, but the gifts make him able to achieve superhuman deeds. It should be stressed that this also means that the virtues produce actions caused by man's reason itself, whereas the gifts (that is, heroic virtue) produce actions essentially caused from outside man, by God.<sup>2</sup> Thomas's use of the term heroic virtue to exemplify the relationship between *virtutes* and *dona* was highly important in subsequent developments. Of course, this relationship was an area of Christian theology that became a dividing line in the Protestant Reformation. Nonetheless, heroic virtue seems to have been even more frequently used after the Reformation period, in both Catholic and Protestant countries.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw a number of developments that had a lasting influence through to the early modern period. One important example of this is Jean Buridan (1295–1358), who understood heroic virtue to be a perfect form of prudence from which other perfect virtues would follow. Heroic virtue is both intellectual and practical, as the good man achieves perfection in all parts of the soul. However, according to Buridan, the practical is generally subordinated to the intellectual—in fact, Aristotle himself is used as an example of intellectual heroic virtue. More importantly, he argued that this form of perfect, godlike virtue could only be achieved under certain circumstances. More precisely, this godlike virtue required a “man of optimal birth, with optimal habituation and education”.<sup>3</sup> In Buridan's view, some men are simply by nature better (and some are worse). His emphasis on what we may perhaps call good breeding is, in Saarinen's view, an instance of an important shift towards a more individualistic view of heroic virtue. The fact that men's ethical dispositions already differ at birth, in combination with the idea that heroic virtue can be achieved in many different areas of life opens up new possibilities for discussing innate talent and the corresponding occupation or calling in life. Characteristically, Buridan also viewed heroic virtue as a concept of moral philosophy, as opposed to Thomas, who was more interested in its theological dimension.<sup>4</sup>

2 Costa, “Heroic virtue in the Commentary Tradition,” 162–166; Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*, 7, 43, 58–60.

3 “vir optime natus per optimam assuetudinem et eruditionem”, quoted in Saarinen, “Virtus heroica,” 98.

4 Saarinen, “Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage,” 454–463.

## Heroic Virtue in Catholicism

From the time of the Counter-Reformation onwards, the subject of heroic virtue began to be illustrated with Christian examples such as Christ himself, or, more importantly, the saints, in Catholic theology. In Hoffmann's view, the interest in heroic virtue was always driven by theology. But Biörn Tjällén clearly shows that heroic virtue had also featured prominently in political contexts in the Middle Ages, as it did so often in the Early Modern period (see Tjällén's article in this volume). In any case, beginning in the sixteenth century, heroic virtue became strongly associated with Christ and the saints, and in particular, martyrdom and other forms of self-sacrifice and asceticism. During the first half of the seventeenth century, the term heroic virtue became central to discussions on the criteria for sainthood. This was connected to the formalization of the processes of canonization, which began at that time. For the first time there appeared a number of theological treatises wholly dedicated to the subject of heroic virtue. Heroic virtue began to be used as the technical term for the degree of virtue required of a saint.<sup>5</sup>

The most important contribution to the discussion was Cardinal Lorenzo Brancati da Lauria's (1612–1693) disputation, *De virtute heroica*, published in 1668 as part of his enormous commentaries on John Duns Scotus. In many ways Brancati's views build on Thomas's foundations. According to Brancati, heroic virtue "[...] perfects man and makes him excellent to such a degree that he becomes elevated above other men and similar to the gods or God in his actions [...]"<sup>6</sup> There is heroic virtue of both a natural and a supernatural kind, and these are quite separate. This means that there is on the one hand a heroic degree of the four cardinal virtues, and a heroic degree of the theological virtues on the other. Thus, there is one Christian and one worldly heroic virtue. Christian heroic virtue is distinguished from the philosophical or worldly type in several ways. First, it is characterized by a likeness to Christ. Heroic virtue is defined as that which makes man similar to the gods, and consequently Christian heroic virtue is that by which a man's actions make him similar to Christ. Moreover, it is caused by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in fact, so much so that these replace man's reason. In addition, Christian heroic virtue is more perfect than philosophical heroic virtue, as the latter is always hampered by man's fallen nature. Christian heroic virtue must also aim at the supernatural goal (*finis supernaturalis*). Finally, Christian heroic virtue in Brancati's view

5 Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*, 49, 93–94, 154–155.

6 "[...] hominem ita perficit et adeo excellentem reddit, ut eum supra ceteros homines elevet et diis seu Deo similem in operando faciat [...]", quoted in Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*, 49.

always involves “abnegation” and suppression of the passions, further stressing the importance of asceticism and self-sacrifice. The regular, non-heroic, virtues are still the foundation: the gifts raise man from there to the level of heroic virtue. Thus, Christian heroic virtue comprises both the three theological *and* the four cardinal virtues.<sup>7</sup>

Brancati’s disputation was elaborated on in the eighteenth century by Pope Benedict XIV (Prospero Lambertini, 1675–1758), but Brancati established a definition of the concept of heroic virtue the essence of which has lasted until modern times. Since his time, the Catholic Church has required all seven virtues (cardinal and theological) in a heroic degree for the canonization of saints.

### Heroic Virtue in Protestantism

Because heroic virtue remains an important idea in Catholic theology today, it is perhaps not surprising that it has most often been associated with Catholicism in modern historical research. On the other hand, scholarly interest in the history of this concept has been limited. To our knowledge, only one monograph has been exclusively devoted to the study of the development of the concept of heroic virtue. This is the 1933 study by the German Catholic theologian Rudolf Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend: Geschichte und Inhalt eines theologischen Begriffes*.<sup>8</sup> Hoffmann traced *virtus heroica* through the history of theology, starting with the background in Aristotle, moving on through scholasticism to the introduction of heroic virtue into the theories of canonization of the seventeenth century, which Hoffman saw as the apogee of the development of heroic virtue as a theological concept. He described the work of Cardinal Brancati as being simultaneously the highpoint and the ending of the theoretical discussions on heroic virtue.

Hoffmann’s study has been of great value to the authors of the present volume, especially in virtue of the long time span covered by him. However, *Die heroische Tugend* was written in a very specific context and with a very particular focus. The motivation behind his book was the perceived need, within contemporary Catholic theology, for a clarification of a concept that was (and still is) of great importance in the process of the canonization of saints. Thus the motivation behind Hoffmann’s work was to a great extent the same as that behind Brancati’s more than 250 years before him. Consequently, Hoffmann’s

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7 Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*, 103–112.

8 Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*.



work contains much valuable information, but there are also some obvious problems resulting from his focus and motivations. As *Die heroische Tugend* is still the only monograph available on the subject, it is important to address some of these problems. Apart from a generally ahistorical, non-contextual approach, it is problematic in at least three important ways.

First, as we have already hinted at, Hoffmann does not show any interest in the political uses of the concept. Second, although he clearly understands heroic virtue to be a philosophical term originating in Aristotle's ethics, and only subsequently introduced into Christian theology, Hoffman consciously or unconsciously takes it for granted that it is essentially a theological concept. This may be a natural choice for a theologian but from the perspective of intellectual and cultural history, this results in a misleading one-sidedness. Third, Hoffman exclusively considers sources from within what he considers to be a canonical Catholic tradition. His is basically a story of an idea found in Aristotle, introduced into theology as a result of the great rediscovery of the philosopher in the High Middle Ages, and finally systematized by Brancati in the Counter-Reformation (although Hoffman would never use the latter term). The fact that heroic virtue was a concept that was also commonly used in Protestant theology is completely ignored. In fact, Hoffman does not even mention the Reformation, Protestantism, Luther or Calvin.

Recently, however, the Finnish theologian and philosopher Risto Saarinen has devoted a number of excellent articles to the theme of heroic virtue in late medieval and early modern theology (Protestant and Catholic), and thereby provided a well-needed broadening of the discussion.<sup>9</sup> Saarinen has argued that the theological dimension of the concept of heroic virtue (as studied by Hoffman) was only one of at least three separate sets of questions that were discussed in the commentaries to Aristotle's treatment of the subject in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The most important of these was that of heroic moral virtue; the second was the religious form of heroic virtue; the third was intellectual heroic virtue.<sup>10</sup>

The present volume will provide a wealth of further evidence that heroic virtue was much more wide spread than Hoffman's account suggests. In particular, it will show that it was a highly favoured concept in both Catholic and

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9 Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische tugend in der protestantischen Ethik: Von Melanchthon zu den Anfängen der finnischen Universität Turku," in *Melanchthon und Europa*, vol. 1, Skandinavien und Mitteleuropa, Melanchthon-Schriften der Stadt Bretten, 6:1, Fran Günter and Martin Treu (eds.), (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001); Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica"; Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage".

10 Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage," 450–452.

Protestant moral philosophy, but also, interestingly, in the *political* thinking of both confessions, thus perhaps adding an important fourth type to Saarinen's scheme. With Saarinen we share the impression that *virtus heroica* was a small but important part of Aristotle's ethics, and thus a common inheritance from the classical world shared by Catholics and Protestants alike. The canonization process was just one of several specific contexts in which pre-modern Europeans found heroic virtue to be a useful idea.

As we have seen, medieval Christian theology taught that heroic virtue was comparable to divine gifts, in the sense that scholastic theology distinguished between virtues and gifts (*virtutes* and *dona*). Heroic virtue, like divine gifts, is not achieved through habit or training alone, but requires divine influence on man as well.

Heroic virtue became prominent in Lutheran theology, especially in the second half of the sixteenth century. By this time heroic virtue was, in Risto Saarinen's view, one of the main themes of Protestant ethics. Considering the firm Lutheran rejection of saints and more specifically, of Thomas's teachings on *virtutes* and *dona*, this is puzzling. Why did Lutherans make use of the concept at all?<sup>11</sup> According to Saarinen, heroic virtue was used most frequently in two non-theological areas by Protestants, a fact that perhaps already hints at an answer to the question.<sup>12</sup>

Martin Luther seems to have known the concept of heroic virtue well, and he developed it into his idea of what he called *Wundermänner*. Luther writes of such *Wundermänner* and of heroic virtue as *göttliche Tugend* or *fürstliche Tugend* in a number of his works. He sees biblical heroes and modern worldly princes as such men of wonder or simply states that worldly rulers can be understood as being in a sense gods on earth, clearly indicating that his use of the concept of heroic virtue fits in with his views on the divine institution of worldly government. In line with his other views, he also considers rulers and princes to be godlike not in the sense of personal piety, but in the sense that their estate as such (*Obrigkeitsstand*) is divine. That heroic virtue in Luther has little to do with personal moral excellence is also clear from his view that the exemplary figures of the Old Testament possessed it as a consequence of their divine mission. Thus they would in exceptional cases be forced to violate the dictates of justice in a way that could only be justified as being an *impetus singularis Dei*. This also meant that actions such as the sacrifice of Isaac, while in this sense heroic, were not to be imitated by ordinary men.<sup>13</sup>

11 Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend in der protestantischen Ethik," 129–130.

12 Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage," 452.

13 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 101–102.

With Luther, and in the tradition that followed, heroic virtue became more of a subject of its own, separate from the context of commentaries on Aristotle, but also taking on a new set of meanings that also removed it further from the original Aristotelian context.<sup>14</sup>

According to Luther's follower Philipp Melanchthon, there is a natural, that is, innate, element in virtue. For training and habituation to result in actual virtue, there must be some talent already present in man. Heroic virtue has a similar function: it is an extraordinary gift, as found in Alexander the Great or Caesar, but interestingly also in musicians, philosophers or artists. Among others, Melanchthon mentions his near contemporary, Josquin des Prez: it is apparent that this means it is a gift in quite a different sense than in the writings of Melanchthon's Catholic counterparts. In general, Melanchthon describes these famous men as examples of single virtues of an extraordinary degree, not as men possessing all virtues. Although a result of a divine gift, Melanchthon also considers heroic virtue as such to be a worldly virtue. Furthermore, Melanchthon argued, just like Luther had done, that heroic actions are *extra regulam*, and for this reason not to be imitated.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, the rising importance of heroic virtue in theological contexts from the late sixteenth century onwards is connected to the formalization of the canonization process in Catholic countries. In Saarinen's view, a parallel development in Protestant countries is connected to the rise of the absolutist state (this is developed at length in Hellerstedt's article in this volume).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, he argues that the view that there is an innate element in heroic virtue in the form of a divine gift, found in Melanchthon and in later Protestant moral philosophy, is an example of how early Protestant ethics converged with the individualistic and elitist Renaissance view of man. It also points forward, towards eighteenth-century discussions on the intellectual genius.<sup>17</sup>

On a philosophical level, the growing importance of this Aristotelian concept can also be explained by the revival of Aristotelian scholasticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which influenced theologians and philosophers of all confessions. Francesco Piccolomini's Catholic textbook of moral philosophy (publ. 1583) is a case in point, as the work clearly influenced

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14 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 105–106, 113.

15 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 103; Saarinen, "Die heroische tugend in der protestantischen Ethik", 132. Interestingly, there are parallels in Catholic canonization process, where the virtues of the saints are not always considered appropriate for imitation, at least not for everyone. Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend*, 150.

16 Saarinen, "Die heroische tugend in der protestantischen Ethik," 130–132, 134, 138.

17 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 113–114.

subsequent Protestant moral philosophy. Piccolomini argued that heroic virtue correctly understood is a concept not of theology but of moral philosophy. He also stressed the political relevance of the concept: classical heroes and modern Italian princes are used as examples of heroic virtue, but saints or religious figures are conspicuously absent. Piccolomini argues that it is vital that true heroes be distinguished from cruel tyrants, and that we do not sanctify vice by calling it heroic virtue, foreshadowing important developments in the following century.<sup>18</sup>

Calvinist theologian Bartholomäus Keckermann's *Systema Ethicae* (1610) agrees with Melancthon in asserting that intellectual and religious, as well as practical, virtues can be called heroic, and that heroic deeds are extraordinary, and therefore not to be imitated. Johann Avenarius of Wittenberg, who both followed and criticized Piccolomini, argued in 1623 that Machiavelli had been wrong in accusing the Christian religion of not encouraging virtue—the Christian religion only directs heroic virtue at another, higher, goal. In contrast to Piccolomini, he argues that there are religious, intellectual as well as practical forms of heroic virtue, while his Lutheran colleague Martini, who also drew heavily on Piccolomini, considered the religious form as a subject of theology, not moral philosophy (and therefore does not consider it proper to discuss it).<sup>19</sup> The Lutheran Heider's 1628 textbook presented the view that heroic virtue is purer and more perfect in Christians, but that it can be found in pagans as well. The Swedish university textbook on ethics, *Collegium Ethicum* (1649), by the Åbo professor, Michael Wexionius (Gyldenstolpe), includes an extensive chapter on heroic virtue. Following Heider's work, Wexionius's treatment of the subject can be summarized in three main points. First of all, heroic virtue is a result of divine inspiration. Secondly, heroic virtue properly called is only found in Christians. And thirdly, intellectual skills may also be called heroic virtues.<sup>20</sup>

The seventeenth century generally seems to have been something of a golden age for heroic virtue. Hoffmann suggested that the vogue for classical ideas and images was a part of the explanation for the theological interest in heroic virtue in that period. This is even more likely to be true for its political uses. Heroic virtue became a standard feature of political ideology and propaganda. German literary historian Martin Disselkamp has argued for a strong connection to the fashionable ideology of absolute monarchy. However, he also highlights an increasingly critical discussion. In Disselkamp's view, heroic

18 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 106–107.

19 Saarinen, "Virtus Heroica," 108–111.

20 Saarinen, "Die heroische tugend in der protestantischen Ethik," 135–137.

virtue was part of an ideology the purpose of which was to compensate for a loss of legitimacy in an era of increasingly rationalist politics. This soon brought with it problems of *raison d'état* and dissimulation, and the charge, associated with the Enlightenment, that heroic virtue was only a mask intended to disguise ulterior motives.<sup>21</sup>

A final reference should be made to that other domain in which heroic virtue played a foremost role, that is, in epic literature. Heroic virtue's epic character was already present in Aristotle's first description of it in the extraordinary qualities of Hector in Homer's *Iliad*. Although this aspect will not be a primary focus of the investigations in the present volume, it will nonetheless be alluded to in several of the articles, such as those of Kolrud and Fogelberg Rota. The same tension between the active and contemplative role of virtues as outlined above were to play a major role in the evolution of the epic genre from antiquity to the Renaissance. John M. Steadman has discussed these frictions "between active and contemplative virtues, acquired and infused virtues, moral and theological virtues; between ideals of the hero as destroyer and benefactor, philosopher and conqueror, inventor and orator, ascetic and lover, martyr and Machiavellian prince" and how they influenced the poetical debate and the choice of arguments for the great epics of the Renaissance.<sup>22</sup> On one side stood the necessity of the epic poet to entertain his reader and, on the other, the obligation to point out heroes who were irreproachable moral examples. These two, apparently divergent, quests were united in the theatrical genre of court ballet, as it was developed in France from the late sixteenth century and later introduced into several countries, such as Savoy and Sweden. Marie-Claude Canova-Green has shown how court ballet's aesthetics with its intrinsic requirements of variety stood between a dramatic and epic form.<sup>23</sup> Ballet's capacity to adapt is one of the reasons it was used so frequently to portray intellectual and theological virtues while preserving its ability to entertain, an aspect which it is possible to detect both in its expressions at the Court of Savoy and in Sweden.

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21 Martin Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus: Konzeptionen "politischer" Größe in Literatur und Traktatistik des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Frühe Neuzeit 65 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002).

22 John M. Steadman, "The Arming of an Archetype: Heroic Virtue and the Conventions of Literary Epic," in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Norman T. Burns and Christopher Reagan (eds.), (London-Sydney-Auckland-Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), 153–154.

23 Marie-Claude Canova-Green, "From Tragicomedy to Epic: The Court Ballets of Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin," in *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* (2007:2), 157–159.

## Overview of the Volume

Erik Eliasson's article, "The Late Ancient Development of a Notion of Heroic Virtue" is both a first example of the reception of the Aristotelian idea, as well as an extension of this introduction, supplying some of the context for the fundamental developments of the subsequent tradition. Eliasson starts off with the formulation (or rather the non-formulation) of the concept of heroic virtue by Aristotle, and he continues to trace its adaptation in Late Ancient Neoplatonist philosophy. Eliasson moves on to describe the influence that this notion of the heroic as part of a scale of virtues acquired through the work of Macrobius, who stands as the first Neoplatonist to refer explicitly to heroic virtue. A brief sketch of the reception of these ideas by Early Christian theology, not only confined to the work of Augustine, concludes the first piece and provides a necessary background to the following articles.

In Late Ancient discussions on heroic virtue, it is already possible to discern two fundamental attitudes towards this quality, corresponding to two main traditions, that is, a more contemplative versus a more active one. As has already been mentioned, previous research on the theme of heroic virtue has focused primarily on the theological implications of the concept, while our aim has been to enlarge the scope to include its political dimension. Since the heroic was sanctioned in the first half of the seventeenth century as one of the three requirements in the canonization of saints, alongside doctrinal purity and miraculous intercession after death, its influence has been intimately connected with the Roman Catholic Church. This major event in the reception history of heroic virtue has somehow concealed the different fields of use this concept retained both before and after the beginning of the seventeenth century. This is the case not only, though perhaps most strikingly, in its use in Protestant theology from the sixteenth and seventeenth century, as argued by Saarinen, but also, and maybe foremost, in its importance in political philosophy from Late Antiquity up to the eighteenth century. This political tradition has its roots as far back as, at least, the thirteenth-century commentaries on Aristotle's *Politics* and his discussion of the different forms of government. The philosopher's idea of the theoretical possibility of the rise of a supereminent man, that is, a man far above all other citizens due to his virtues and capacities, was used by Peter of Auvergne and Giles of Rome as the main argument for the legitimization of sovereign rule. Biörn Tjällén discusses the early phase of this tradition in "Aristotle's Heroic Virtue and Medieval Theories of Monarchy" and unveils the absolutist tendencies concealed behind this adaptation. Heroic and divine are considered closely related to each other by thirteenth-century commentators and sometimes even used as synonyms. This godlike character

of heroic virtue is already implied in Aristotle's definition in which it is, strictly speaking, described not as a virtue in itself, but rather as an excess of virtue and therefore surpassing normal human potential. This aspect opens up a series of questions that are central to all articles in the volume: Is it possible to acquire heroic virtue or is it something innate? And who can possess the potential to develop this quality?

Nils Holger Petersen argues in "Heroic Virtue in Medieval Liturgy" that moral ideals found in medieval Scandinavian liturgical texts closely resemble the notion of heroic virtue. Descriptions of a saint's martyrdom would often involve representing his or her endurance and restraint in the face of violence and torture in ways approaching a superhuman form of self-control of the kind associated with heroic virtue. This quality of endurance was also transposed to a kingly sphere. Petersen demonstrates how the saintly and kingly spheres coincide in their treatment of the heroic in this early material.

Queen Christina, who in 1654 abdicated the Swedish throne and converted to Catholicism, provides an interesting example on the great similarities in the uses of heroic virtue within both Catholicism and Protestantism in the Early Modern period. The queen's position in connection to the reception and development of the concept of heroic virtue is treated in Stefano Fogelberg Rota's "Anti-Protestant Heroic Virtue in Early Modern Rome: Queen Christina (1626–1689) and Senator Nils Bielke (1706–1765)". The Swedish queen appears in Fogelberg Rota's article standing at several heroic crossroads. The appearance of heroic virtue as a character in the court ballet *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*] (1645), performed to praise Christina's kingly qualities at the beginning of her personal reign, parallels the politically oriented conception of this virtue introduced into Sweden by late Renaissance humanism. The queen manifested great interest in heroic virtue even after the end of her reign. Christina's move to Rome, after her abdication and conversion to Catholicism, entailed her involvement as an important patron of the arts in the papal city. Her foundation of a learned academy, *Accademia Reale*, was centred on the very concept of heroic virtue, and this connection is emphasized by the queen in speeches held in the assembly in order to legitimate her position as sovereign monarch in Rome. Although Catholic theological discussions on heroic virtue are discernable in these speeches, the primary objective was the idea of kingly representation, the legitimation of Christina's status in Rome as a queen without a country. The circumstances surrounding two biographies of the Swedish senator in Rome, Nils Bielke, from the second half of the eighteenth century, share the same anti-Protestant stance as the discussions held in Christina's academy. These writings, still influenced by a post Counter-Reformation discourse, draw even more consciously from the theological debate on heroic virtue reignited



by Prospero Lambertini's (Benedict XIV, 1675–1758) treatise, *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione* (1737). The concept of heroic virtue presented in the praise of Bielke more consciously refers to the essential intervention of grace.

Thus, from at least the thirteenth century onwards, heroic virtue stands out as intimately connected with kingly power. This connection was strengthened in the Early Modern period, as is evident from all the remaining articles in the book. From the Renaissance onwards, heroic virtue also came to be the subject of a variety of visual representations. Kristine Kolrud's article "The Gem and the Mirror of Heroic Virtue: Emanuele Tesauro and the Heroic at the Court of Savoy" deals in particular with the visual expressions of the heroic at the court of Savoy at the middle of the seventeenth century, even though the other articles also deal with different kinds of visual material. In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1593), the image of Hercules represents heroic virtue. Ripa's work was widely studied and used by court artists, but Kolrud shows how a wide variety of images were used in connection with the concept of heroic virtue at the court of Savoy.

The last third of the volume explores the uses of notions of heroic virtue in the kingdom of Sweden during the Early Modern period. In the strongly Lutheran state, heavily involved in the wars of the seventeenth century, political appropriation of the concept dominated, whereas the connection with saints was obviously absent. This is evident in Tania Preste's article "The King's Virtues in Swedish Mirrors for Princes c. 1300–c. 1600". Departing from the broadest possible definition of the traditional genre of the *specula principum*, as applying to all writings meant to guide the ruler, the author discusses the adaptation of the ideal of a perfectly virtuous ruler in Sweden between the fourteenth and the seventeenth century.

While the sources examined by Preste only seldom expressly mention heroic virtue—though constantly referring to the supereminent character of the virtuous ruler and (*nota bene*) of his counsellors—the dissertations analysed by Andreas Hellerstedt in "The Absolute Hero: Heroic Greatness and Royal Absolutism in Sweden 1685–1715" make ample references to the concept. In his article, Hellerstedt shows how the strong tendency towards absolutism in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Sweden made the idea of heroic excellence particularly useful. German *Späthumanismus* had already gained importance in Sweden during the reign of Queen Christina (1644–1654) through the presence of German scholars such as Johann Heinrich Boeclerus (1611–1672). Boeclerus was a significant figure in the development of the concept of the heroic in Germany in the seventeenth century, as Disselkamp (2002) has shown. Through his Swedish disciples, he also came to have a dominating



influence on the formulation and uses of this concept in Sweden at the time when the monarchy was establishing an absolute form of rule. The figure of the hero was perfectly suited to praising and legitimizing the rule of an absolute monarch, who needed to present himself as standing not only above the law, but also beyond the normal moral yardstick by which men were judged.

Jennie Nell's "The Enlightened Hero: Virtue, Magnanimitas and Glory in Panegyric Poetry on Gustavus III 1771–1792" concludes the volume and draws attention to the late eighteenth-century development and criticism of heroic virtue. Nell considers the adaptation and reappearance of the heroic in panegyrics dedicated to Gustavus III as partly hidden under the mantle of other kingly virtues such as *magnanimitas* and steered by the broader phenomenon generally referred to as the 'democratization of virtues'. The eighteenth century saw ideals of virtue applied to larger portions of the population than before, but virtues thought appropriate for different classes in society differed widely. The virtues of the ideal ruler also changed, as clemency, justice and *magnanimitas* were stressed and the war-like qualities of the statesman and commander so prominent in the seventeenth century were now less strongly emphasized.

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*Heroic Virtue between Active and Contemplative Life  
in Late Antiquity and the High Middle Ages*





# The Late Ancient Development of a Notion of Heroic Virtue

Erik Eliasson

## Introduction: The Aristotelian Origin of the Notion of Heroic Virtue?

The common reference for discussions of the ancient origin of heroic virtue is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.1. The passage describes the disposition as opposed to bestiality (*thêriotês*), a virtue somehow “beyond-us”, a heroic virtue, or, in a sense, a divine virtue. However, Aristotle gives no further account of this heroic virtue, but simply mentions a few examples such as that Spartans sometimes call someone they admire “a divine man” and that Homer depicts Hector “as a god’s child” and refers to the common idea that surpassing virtue (*di’ aretês hyperbolên*) makes gods out of men. At the same time, he stresses that a god does not have any virtue or vice, and that the condition of a god is more worthy than virtue (*timiôteron aretês*), just like the state of a beast is something different than a vice. Aristotle leaves us with this apparently contradictory sketch, which presumably implies that the state referred to (a) is not identical to virtue, but (b) can somehow be referred to as a virtue, (c) is different from the state of a god, which is more worthy than virtue, but (d) is somehow like that state. This account is confusing especially in that it blends references to a common (that is, non-philosophical) linguistic practice with philosophical distinctions between different kinds of states of character. This, together with the important fact that Aristotle does not go further and spell out what he thinks is correct about either previous traditional views or philosophical accounts of the notion, indicates that it does not have any important role in his ethical theory.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, according to an influential contemporary interpretation, defended by Gauthier for instance, Aristotle simply came up with the notion of heroic virtue here in order to fill the gap in the schema: that is, there are character-states less fixed than virtues and vices, namely incontinence (*akrasia*) and continence (*enkrateia*). Then of course the opposite of vice is

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<sup>1</sup> As correctly pointed out by John M. Cooper, “*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1–2: Introduction, Method, Puzzles,” in *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics Book VII*, Carlo Natali (ed.), Symposium Aristotelicum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9–39, 19.

virtue, but beyond vice there is bestiality, and so beyond virtue there must be something too, such as heroic, superhuman virtue, simply for the sake of harmony or symmetry in his account.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, this account is sometimes understood to be made clear in the *Politics*, where Aristotle discusses the political consequences that would follow if there were one or several individuals in a state who differed immensely from the rest through their excess of virtue (*kat' aretês hyperbolên*). However, these passages never involve any account of what such virtue could amount to, and rather than indicating something beyond virtue or some distinct form of virtue, Aristotle seems simply to refer to individuals possessing a relatively higher amount of virtue than their fellow citizens. Moreover, in none of these passages is it evident that Aristotle is actually committed to the existence of such individuals.<sup>3</sup>

Although the notion of heroic, superhuman, or divine virtue at *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.1 may seem isolated, this notion has connections to Aristotle's theme of aspects of virtue and the idea of man's true nature as something

2 René-Antoine Gauthier and Jean-Yves Jolif, *Aristote: L'Éthique à Nicomaque, Introduction, traduction et commentaire* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1958–1959), II.2, 584. Gauthier also indicates that rather than a reference to a technical theory, the mention of heroic virtue at *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.1 probably corresponds to popular beliefs of his time, and indeed it seems plausible to infer a simple reference to the phenomenon of the ancient Greek hero cults.

3 In the discussion of kingship, the case is analysed (*Politics* III, 1284a3ff.) where some citizen(s) differ from the rest through excess of virtue (κατ' ἀρετῆς ὑπερβολήν) to such an extent that their political capacity cannot be compared to that of the rest. Such a person being “as a god among men” and “themselves a law”, cannot be ruled by the rest and (1284b25–34) since their superiority involves *virtue*, they must not be ostracized, but should rather be made kings. Again, at 1288a15–29, if an individual or a family would exceed (ὑπερέχειν) everyone else in virtue they are, by having such an excess (τῷ [...] τηλικαύτην ὑπερβολήν ἔχοντι), legitimate sovereign(s) *absolutely*, i.e., not merely regarding only some aspect. Significantly though, in the *Politics* VII discussion of the ideal constitution, the example (1332b16–23) of some people differing from the others as much as we believe “gods and heroes differ from mankind”, is, as Cooper, “Puzzles”, 2009, 19, n. 22, notes, counterfactual, i.e., Aristotle argues that if there were people who had so great a superiority (ὑπερβολή) as regards both the body and the soul that it was evident to those ruled, it would be better that the same people were rulers and ruled respectively once for all, but this is not the case Aristotle claims, since this is difficult to grasp (οὐ ῥᾶδιον λαβεῖν), and so all should have a share in ruling and being ruled. To be sure, these *Politics* examples mainly serve to illustrate the principle of right of merit, and its limitations, and do not imply that Aristotle in his ethical and political theory laid great weight to any notion of heroic virtue. Cf. also the brief account of the kind of kingship “in the heroic ages” (ἡ περὶ τοὺς ἡρωικοὺς χρόνους (*Politics* 1285b3f.).

divine rather than simply human. That theme is treated at length in Book Ten of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (ch. 7–8), which addresses the key question of the work: what constitutes happiness. The answer is found in a life of contemplation, which is made distinct from the life of moral virtue, considered a happy life only in a secondary sense. Much of the argument here centres on contemplation as the activity of the gods, and therefore the most divine one, and the view that humans are happy to the extent that they have some likeness to this activity.<sup>4</sup>

One alternative solution, then, would be to identify the discussion of the divine qualities of the life of contemplation in Book Ten, as, in a sense, Aristotle's intended fulfilment of the sketch given at VII.1.1 of a notion of super-human virtue. Such a connection however, is never indicated explicitly by Aristotle and must remain at best inferential.

From a Platonist point of view however, the theme of certain types or levels of virtue being godlike, as in the account found in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book Ten) of contemplation, evidently picks up Plato's notion of virtue as assimilation to god (*homoiôsis theô*), to the extent to which this is possible, from the *Theaetetus* (176b1, and, for example, *Republic* 500c1ff.). The Neoplatonists thus developed a theory of the scale of virtues, drawing on and attempting to reconcile these rather different Platonic accounts of virtue.

It is well known that Aristotle's notion of heroic virtue was given several very different interpretations in the more substantial Christian Latin reception of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Middle Ages. Some of the problematic elements in these interpretations are a consequence of attempts to explain what are somewhat difficult, though not unknown, concepts in a Christian context by the inclusion of non-Aristotelian ancient Neoplatonist material from Macrobius's discussion, in his *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*,

4 As happiness must be "lacking nothing" (οὐδενὸς ἐνδεής) and self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης) (1176b5–6), and is an activity in accordance with the strongest or highest virtue, which is the activity of the best and most divine part of us; it is the activity of contemplation (ἡ ἐνέργεια [...] θεωρητικὴ 1177a16–18, cf. σοφία being the highest virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI), which possesses the highest degree of self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια [...] μάλιστα 1177a26–27), and is not in need of or directed towards something else, but is the only activity which is its own end and does not aim at something else (1177b1–4). The contemplative life *transcends the human level*, and is achieved not through our humanity but through what is divine in us (1177b26–28), whereas the life of moral virtue, whose activities are human, is only happiness in a secondary sense (1178a9–10). Contemplation is the activity of the gods, who thus enjoy supreme blessedness and happiness, and humans are blessed in so far as they have some *likeness* (ὁμοιωμά τι) to such an activity (1178b7f.).

of the virtues of so-called *purified souls*.<sup>5</sup> This is a discussion that in turn is claimed by Macrobius to reflect Plotinus's Neoplatonist distinctions between the levels of virtue. This is quite interpretative though, since, as we will see, the purified souls and their particular level of virtues is a theme really only spelled out later, by Plotinus's pupil, Porphyry, and indeed by the latter's pupil and Plotinus's fierce critic, Iamblichus.

For Iamblichus, the purified souls are alone capable of descending again into the material world while being both free from passions and constantly contemplating. Although launched as a criticism of Plotinus's theory of the undescended soul, this doctrine, in suggesting the possibility of incarnated souls remaining practically 'undescended' is, as has recently been suggested, similar to Plotinus's position on some perfect souls, but their common intuitions moreover constitute a general trait of continuity in later Neoplatonism.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter first discusses the late ancient Neoplatonist development of a theory of superhuman virtue, within the theory of the scale of virtues or levels

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5 See Iacopo Costa, "Heroic Virtue in the Commentator Tradition on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," in István P. Bejszy (ed.), *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics 1200–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 153–172 (following Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage der individualistischen Ethik im 14. Jahrhundert," in Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (eds.), *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 450–463, 452ff., and Rudolf Hofmann, *Die heroische Tugend: Geschichte und Inhalt eines theologischen Begriffes*, Münchener Studien zur historischen Theologie, Heft 12 (München: Verlag Kösel & Pustet, 1933), 27ff. Costa shows that Albert the Great at *Super Ethica* 7.1 identifies Macrobius's notion of *virtutes purgati animi* with Aristotle's notion of heroic virtue, which he spelled out as an extreme form of *continentia*. Costa argues that the notion of a state of virtue where the passions are destroyed (as Albert depicts it) is incompatible with Aristotle's doctrine as a whole in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but that Albert's conflation may be influenced by earlier Christian concepts of *continentia* in e.g., Paul and Augustine (AD 354–430), which were common before the rediscovery of Aristotle's ethics in the Latin west. Costa also observes that Albert in his second commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* asserts that the theory of heroic virtue, again identified with the *virtutes purgati animi*, is a Platonist theory, since it was developed by Plato, Plotinus and the Stoics, and that Albert generally classified Plato among the Stoics. One might add that such a stoicizing reception of Plato makes the attribution of the actual Stoic ideal of the extirpation of the passions doctrine to Plato himself more natural, even though it is as incompatible with the doctrine of the four cardinal virtues of Plato's *Republic* as it is with the notion of moral virtue of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

6 Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 40–44; Daniela P. Taormina and Rosa M. Piccione (eds.), *Giamblico: I frammenti delle epistole. Introduzione, testo, traduzione e commento*. Elenchos, 56 (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2010), 244–271.



of virtue, particularly the account of the purified souls and their virtues, in order to give a more complete picture of how and why these non-Aristotelian developments of the notion of heroic virtue came to be a crucial element in the later Christian accounts of heroic virtue—not therefore as a reception of what Aristotle hints at in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1, but rather as a reception of the complex Platonic sources on the nature of virtue, an early example of which Aristotle's account may well be considered.

As has been pointed out,<sup>7</sup> the application of the Neoplatonist material in the early medieval commentaries on Aristotle's *EN* are also based on older Christian sources discussing the virtues of Jesus, the martyrs and the saints. This chapter thus briefly analyses some important Late Ancient cases revealing this, to a large extent, parallel development.

### Plotinus, *Enneads* II.1 (*On Virtues*), and the Distinction between Lower and Higher Levels of the Four Cardinal Virtues

While Plotinus is often named as the originator of the notion of levels or a *scale of virtues* thematized and expanded in later Neoplatonism and beyond, it is less certain to what extent we should attribute this concept to him directly or rather to Porphyry, Iamblichus and Macrobius or others who read him that way.<sup>8</sup> In treatise II.1 *On Virtues*, he appears to distinguish different virtues at the different stages in the moral development of the human soul aiming at divinization.

The main distinction is the one between how the four cardinal virtues are practised, expressed and defined differently on a lower level as 'political'

<sup>7</sup> E.g. from Costa, "Heroic virtue".

<sup>8</sup> O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 40–44; Giovanni Catapano, *Plotino: Sulle virtù. Introduzione, testo greco, traduzione e commento* (Pisa: PLUS, 2006), *Introduzione*, with Taormina and Piccione, *Giambrico*, 244–271. Costa, "Heroic Virtue," 156f. appears to take Macrobius's attribution at face value. Paul Henry, *Plotin et l'Occident: Firmicus Maternus, Marius Victorinus, Saint Augustin et Macrobe*, Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, Études et Documents, Fasc.15, (Louvain, 1934), 160f., holds that while the influence of certain elements alien to the *Enneads* in Macrobius's account shows that he draws on Porphyry, the account as such, with the four levels of virtues, is present already in Plotinus's treatise. Mireille Armisen-Marchetti, *Macrobie: Commentaire au Songe de Scipion; texte établi, traduit et commenté* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001–2003), 158, also asserts that Plotinus is the inventor of the four levels of virtue, and that this is why Macrobius cites his *On virtues, Enneads* II.1 as his source. Most later scholars however agree that Macrobius actually draws on Porphyry's *Sentences*, ch. 32, i.e., as being the origin of the four levels of virtue.

virtues, and on a higher level as ‘purificatory’ virtues. The former are instrumental and subordinate to the latter. Notably, the function of the former, following Plato’s definitions in the *Republic* Book Four (427e–444e), is to by practical wisdom (*phronêsis*) impose a divine measure, deriving from the Intellect onto the desires and the aspects of the soul pertaining to its interaction with the body. The function of the latter, the ‘purificatory’ virtues, is, following Plato’s definition in the *Phaedo* (67b) of virtue as purification, to orient the soul away from those aspects relating to the body, and, following the definition of virtue as assimilation to god in the *Theaetetus* (176a–b), towards the higher divine forms of the life of the Intellect and the One.<sup>9</sup>

Plotinus also makes distinctions between the ‘purificatory’ virtues involved in the process of divinization and those virtues of the resulting purified soul.<sup>10</sup> And, again, distinction is made between these latter virtues on the one hand and their forms or paradigms constituted by the life of Intellect, while still denying that these forms would in themselves constitute virtues.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, it is easy to see how Plotinus’s account, even though he denies that the forms of virtues are virtues in themselves and though he does not develop a terminology for all levels, was later read as a four-level scale of virtues. While Plotinus never calls any of these virtues or levels of virtues ‘heroic’;<sup>12</sup> he clearly depicts the level of ‘political’ virtues as applicable to the specifically *human* life, the life of the good man, whereas the higher virtues express a level of virtue above that human level:

But reaching higher principles and different measures he will act according to these [...] [he] will altogether separate himself, *as far as possible*, from his lower nature and will not live the life of the good man which ‘political’ virtue requires. He will leave that behind, and choose another, the life of the gods: for it is to them, not to good men, that we are to be made like. (my emphasis)<sup>13</sup>

As has been pointed out,<sup>14</sup> while ‘political’ virtues are thus necessary and instrumental for reaching the higher ‘purificatory’ virtues and beyond, the soul

9 *Enneads* II.1, 3, 22–31; 6, 23–7, in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* with O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 41–2, and Luc Brisson (ed.), *Porphyre, Sentences* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 130f.

10 *Enneads* II.1, 4, 1–5, in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*.

11 *Enneads* II.1, 6, 14–19, in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* with O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 42.

12 Plotinus only uses the term ἥρως, once, at *Enneads* III.2.11.13, in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera* referring to the ‘hero’ of a play.

13 *Enneads* II, 1, 7, 19–28 in Henry and Schwyzer, *Plotini Opera*, Transl. O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 43.

14 See O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 43–4 and ch. 7–8 *passim*.

may still, once it has surpassed the level of political virtue, redescend to the level of 'political' virtue and exercise it. This second case thus represents an interesting different function of 'political' virtue, in addition to its instrumental status, namely as a way of communicating divine order from the higher levels into human affairs and the political life of action.

In addition, from the purified state that the soul reaches through these higher, 'purificatory' virtues, it may ascend to the state that consists in living the life of divine Intellect, but notably, this divine state is a state *beyond* virtue. Thus, Plotinus while depicting, in addition to the above-mentioned levels, the paradigms of these virtues in Intellect, using similar terms and definitions as for the actual virtues on the lower levels, he argues that these paradigms are not in themselves virtues,<sup>15</sup> a restriction that Porphyry and later Neoplatonists abandoned.

It is clear then, that Plotinus's account is in no way any direct exegesis or reception of Aristotle's brief mention of heroic or superhuman virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1, or the relevant passages of the *Politics* either,<sup>16</sup> or even an account of Aristotle's distinction between the practical and contemplative virtues and lives, in his ethics and in *Nicomachean Ethics* x in particular.<sup>17</sup> Rather, he draws on Platonic sources and intuitions, depicting the two levels of virtues as directing the soul in two opposing directions, that is, towards the bodily and away from it. Still, as we will see more clearly shortly, precisely by depicting the lower level of virtues as pertaining particularly to the soul's embodied human condition, and the higher virtues as involving instead a higher, superhuman level, he develops a notion of superhuman virtue.

### Porphyry, *Sentences* Chapter 32 and the Systematic Distinction of the Four Levels of Virtue

Porphyry in *Sentences* chapter 32 gives a fuller, technical account of Plotinus's distinctions in *Enneads* II.1, making additions and significantly introducing clear distinctions of *four levels of virtues* (Τέτταρα [...] ἀρετῶν γένη), namely (1) political (πολιτικάί), (2) purificatory (καθαρτικάί), (3) theoretical (θεωρητικάί) and (4) paradigmatic (παραδειγματικάί) virtues.

Significantly, while Plotinus defined the 'political' virtues mainly in terms of being directed towards the good of the embodied individual, Porphyry adds the other aspect central to Plato's original account of the cardinal virtues in the

15 *Enneads* II.1, 6, 13–19.

16 See n. 1 above.

17 O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 42.

*Republic*: the, as it were, ‘outer’ good order between citizens of the state.<sup>18</sup> The distinction between the ‘political’ and ‘purificatory’ levels otherwise repeats Plotinus’s distinction. Thus the ‘political’ virtues involve the *moderation* of passions (μετριοπάθεια) and have the end or scope of ‘living as a human being according to nature’, but the ‘purificatory’ virtues result in *detachment* from passions (απάθεια),<sup>19</sup> and result in assimilation to god.<sup>20</sup>

The third level is the “virtues of the soul exercising intellection”, already “filled” with Intellect.<sup>21</sup> Porphyry emphasizes that these are all mutually implicated so that possessing one virtue on these levels implies possessing the other three too.

The fourth kind, the paradigmatic ones, are those of the Intellect itself which are the paradigms of those of the third kind.

On all four levels, Porphyry defines the specific senses of the four cardinal virtues. Interestingly, he provides partly traditional, partly technical names of the person who possesses these virtues on each level:

In view of this then, he who acts in accordance with the practical virtues is agreed to be ‘a good man’, he who acts in accordance with the purificatory ones is a daemonic man, or even a good daemon, one who acts only according to those which are directed towards intellect is a god, and one who practices the paradigmatic virtues is a ‘father of gods’.<sup>22</sup>

As we will see shortly, the designation of the agent on the ‘purificatory’ level as a ‘daemonic man’ or even a ‘good daemon’, is quite clearly picked up or referred to by Augustine in his attempt to spell out a Christian account of heroic virtue suitable for the depiction of Christian saints. But earlier on as well, in Flavius Philostratus’s third-century *Life of Apollonius* (on which see below), Apollonius, who while a pagan, is described in terms highly similar to the Christian saints:

18 O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, 44.

19 See John M. Dillon, “Iamblichus’ Criticisms of Plotinus’ Doctrine of the Undescended Soul,” in Riccardo Chiaradonna (ed.), *Studi Sull’Anima in Plotino* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2005), 339–351, 811, n. 118.

20 Porphyry, *Sentences* 32, 25, 7–9, in Erich Lamberg (ed.), *Porphyrii Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1975).

21 Porphyry, *Sentences* 32, 27, 8ff, in Lamberg (ed.), *Porphyrii Sententiae*.

22 Porphyry, *Sentences* 32, 31, 4–8, in Lamberg (ed.), *Porphyrii Sententiae*. On the unclear significance of the expression ‘father of gods’, see John M. Dillon, “Traduction anglaise et notes,” 795–835 in Luc Brisson (ed.), *Porphyre, Sentences* (Paris: Vrin, 2005), 813, n. 146, with notes.

a God,<sup>23</sup> and a 'divine man' (θεῖος ἀνὴρ) who is capable of awakening a young woman from death.<sup>24</sup>

Porphyry ends the chapter by focusing on the 'purificatory' virtues since the attainment of these is possible in this life, but ends up implying that even the state above the 'purificatory' virtues, that of the purified soul, may be attained in this life.<sup>25</sup>

### Iamblichus's Expansion of the Scale of Virtues

It is generally acknowledged that Porphyry's account in *Sentences* chapter 32 was read by, and had a large impact on later Neoplatonists, such as Synesius, Marinus, probably Macrobius and, with all likelihood, Iamblichus, Porphyry's direct pupil.<sup>26</sup>

By later sources however, Iamblichus is said to have enlarged the list of virtues as found in Porphyry.<sup>27</sup> According to one recent assessment, Iamblichus's addition to the scale of virtues would consist in the introduction of *four* 'new' levels of virtue: *natural virtues*, *moral or ethical virtues*, below the political ones, and at the highest levels *paradigmatic virtues* and *theurgic virtues*. Thus Iamblichus would precede Proclus in distinguishing the latter two forms—paradigmatic and theurgic. Notably, this picture of individual development distinguishes the virtues resulting from philosophy and those from theurgy. The latter thus demands a superseding of philosophy itself, through the rituals of the theurg, a process that gives the individual knowledge of god and thus purifies the soul and creates happiness.<sup>28</sup>

While this account of Iamblichus is correct as for the additions of the lower levels, it cannot be correct for the highest levels, since as we have seen, Porphyry already in *Sentences* chapter 32 distinguished the paradigmatic virtues. In any case, Iamblichus's expanded scale included six levels, namely (1) *natural virtues*, qualities of the soul that derives from one's specific, or species-given

23 Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 3.50.

24 Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 4.45 with Samson Eitrem, "Zu Philostrats Heroikos," *Symbolae Osloenses* 8 (1929), 1–56, 28, and Jackson P. Hershbell, "Philostratus' *Heroikos* and Early Christianity: Heroes Saints and Martyrs," in Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (eds.), *Philostratus' Heroikos. Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century CE* (Brill: Leiden & Boston, 2004), 169–179, 174.

25 Porphyry, *Sentences* 32, 31, 9–35, 3, in Lamberz (ed.), *Porphyrii Sententiae*.

26 See O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 46, with references given there.

27 I.e. Michael Psellos, *Philosophica Minora* II, 111, 18–19 O'Meara.

28 Taormina and Piccione, *Giamblico*, 268–9.

bodily constitutions,<sup>29</sup> (2) *moral or ethical virtues*, that is, virtues common to children and some animals, depending on the guidance of others through a process merely involving habituation (ἔθισμός) and correct opinion (ὀρθοδοξία) rather than any activity of one's own reason. The latter are in this aspect distinct from the next level, (3) *'political' virtues*, which involve the practice of reason in ordering the soul. As has been pointed out,<sup>30</sup> the 'political' virtues are thus the first really *human* virtues since they correspond to Plato's definition of man as a "rational soul using body as an instrument" in the *Alcibiades* (129e–130c).

As emphasized by later Neoplatonists,<sup>31</sup> it is in fact *only* at this political level that man uses the body as an instrument. An interesting conclusion to draw from this is that the higher levels of virtue following the 'political' virtues are, as in the case of Porphyry's account in *Sentences* chapter 32, in a sense super-human, and concern strictly the Platonic ideal of assimilation to god and a divine level of being. These are, in Iamblichus's account, as in Porphyry's picture in *Sentences* chapter 32, (4) *the purificatory*, (5) *theoretical or contemplative*, and (6) *paradigmatic* virtues, and, in addition, (7) *the theurgic* virtues.<sup>32</sup>

It is easy to see here a potential paradigm for a Christian distinction limiting the capacities and benefits of philosophy to a penultimate level of virtue, and then putting a 'theological' level on top of the scale, as was done at least in later medieval discussions of heroic virtue.

In the *De mysteriis*, Iamblichus replies to the criticism of theurgy launched by Porphyry in *Letter to Anebo*. In his reply he presents a sort of hierarchy of "intermediate beings", between the gods and the souls, namely demons and heroes, with the main function of communicating, or constituting a causal continuum between the lower beings, souls, and the higher ones, gods.<sup>33</sup> Especially given that later, in *De civitate dei*, Augustine attacks this view, that is,

29 See O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 46, n. 24 and further references given there.

30 O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 47–8.

31 Damascius *ap.* Olympiodorus, *In Alcibiadem* 4, 15–21 Westerink, with 177, 14–15 and Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*. 3, 6, 7–8 Westerink. With the comments by O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 48.

32 Cf. the discussion in O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 48; Westerink at Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, 117–18; André J. Festugière, "L'ordre de lecture des dialogues de Platon aux v/vi<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969), 281–96, 295–6, and Taormina and Piccione, *Giamblico*, 268–9, with Psellus, *De omnifaria doctrina*, 71 Westerink, who gives an account of how the levels of assimilation to the divine correspond to these levels of virtues.

33 Iamblichus, *De mysteriis* 1.5, 47ff, in Édouard des Places (ed.), *Jamblique: Les mystères d'Égypte; texte établi et traduit* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966). The fourfold distinction is expanded later on in 11.3.

as it was presented by Porphyry,<sup>34</sup> it would naturally have been interesting to find here an account connecting this hierarchy of beings to the scale of virtues. However, Iamblichus shows no intention to do so and rather keeps to the distinction between the intermediate beings, such as heroes (and demons), and souls, throughout his account.

### Macrobius's Latinization of the Neoplatonist Scale of Virtue

While Iamblichus's version of the scale of virtues may have been the source of the more elaborate later Neoplatonist developments of the theory of the scale of virtues,<sup>35</sup> the contribution of the pagan Macrobius is particularly interesting. His commentary, from c.430 (but distributed some fifty years later)<sup>36</sup> on Cicero's account of the dream of Scipio in Book Six of *De re publica*,<sup>37</sup> is often cited as the source to the fourfold classification of the virtues in the Middle Ages, and its application to the notion of heroic virtue specifically.<sup>38</sup> In particular, this work was largely read and discussed by philosophers and commentators, both pagan and Christian, in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, from Macrobius's relative, Boethius in the early sixth century, and his contemporary Cassiodorus, and even earlier at the end of the fifth century, by Isidorus of Seville. This important reception of the work continued with Abelard in the twelfth century. Abelard adopted the theory of the four levels of virtues and its relation to the immortality of the soul. He was followed by later scholastics such as the Franciscan, Bonaventure, the Dominicans, Albert the Great and

34 For Augustine's account, see below. On Porphyry's criticism and Iamblichus's replies see Henri D. Saffrey, "Les livres IV à VII du *De Mysteriis* de Jamblique relus avec la *Lettre* de Porphyre à *Anébon*," 144–158 in Henry J. Blumenthal & E. Gillian Clark (eds.), *The Divine Iamblichus, Philosopher and Man of Gods*, (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).

35 O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 46, n. 22 lists the later Neoplatonist reception of Iamblichus's list in Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, 8,2 Westerink; Damascius, *In Phaedonem*, I, 138–44 Westerink; Philoponus, *In Categorias*, 141,25–142,3 Busse; Proclus, *In Alcibiadem*. 96 Westerink; Marinus, *Vita Procli*, Ch.3.

36 Jacques Flamant, *Macrobie et le néo-platonisme latin, à la fin du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 140.

37 Cicero's account is focused on giving an account of the more long-lasting rewards of virtue, naturally in a way similar to the myth of Er at the end of Plato's *Republic* x. On the separation of the *Dream of Scipio* from the *De re publica*, see Roberta Caldini Montanari, *Tradizione Medievale ed Edizione Critica del Somnium Scipionis* (Firenze: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2002), 370–4.

38 Costa, "Heroic Virtue," 157f., following Hoffman, *Tugend*, 27ff.



Thomas Aquinas, and this reception continued throughout the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>39</sup>

Macrobius, at *In somnium scipionis* 1, 8 first describes Cicero's view that traditional 'political' virtues, that is, of men that are *rectores et servatores* of states, namely the four cardinal virtues which are implied but not explicitly mentioned here, do produce or guarantee happiness or blessedness after death (§§1–2). This view is then opposed with the view of 'others' (§§3–4), that is, what seems to be partly a straw-man position and partly an intentionally one-sided understanding of the Neoplatonist position that holds that no one but philosophers, who practice the four cardinal virtues in a different contemplative sense, can be happy or blessed. This implies that the traditional Ciceronian account would be false, that is, significantly, that the *rerum publicarum rectores beati esse non possint*.

The solution, according to Macrobius, then comes from Plotinus's *On virtues*, to which Macrobius explicitly refers, which is a rare phenomenon in the work. Plotinus is said to have proposed a scale of virtues, composed of four levels of virtues with four virtues on each level (§5–). These levels, identical to the ones Porphyry distinguishes at *Sentences*, ch. 32, attributed here to Plotinus himself, are thus *virtutes 'politicae [...] purgatoriae [...] animi iam purgati [...] exemplares'*.

Macrobius then defines the *prudentia*, *fortitudo*, *temperantia* and *iustitia* of the political man (§7), through which the *vir bonus* may govern himself and thus the state (§8), where the name *vir bonus* obviously comes from Porphyry's naming of the person possessing this level of virtue.

He continues with the 'purificatory' virtues (§8) already defined (in §4), and furthermore adds that these are virtues of men who decided to purify themselves from the contamination of the body and 'as it were *escape from human affairs* to blend with divine things alone' (*quadam humanorum fuga solis se inserere divinis*), but then asserts that these are the virtues of *men of leisure* who withdraw from political action (*Hae sunt otiosorum qui a rerum publicarum actibus se sequestrant*), thus emphasizing that he is still talking of a state of the soul to be reached in this life.

Thus, regardless of the last remark, Macrobius, like Porphyry, explicitly makes the point that the political level and its virtues constitute the realm of human affairs strictly speaking, whereas the higher levels relate to intellect

39 Flamant, *Macrobe*, 140; 688 ff; 475.



and the divine level and thus the gradual assimilation to the divine,<sup>40</sup> rather than the human, and thus in a sense constitute superhuman levels of virtue.

He then defines the four virtues on the level of already purified souls, where, for example, justice consists in forming a perpetual connection with the divine mind (*divina mens*) by imitating it, thus closely following Porphyry's definitions (§9). In accounting for the exemplary virtues (§10), which reside in the divine mind itself, Macrobius even refers to the divine mind by the Greek term νοῦς, Intellect. Again following Porphyry, he ends by asserting (§11) that the four levels distinguish themselves in how they relate to the passions, in that the first level consists in tempering (*molliunt*) them, the second in suppressing them, the third in forgetting them, and on the fourth level it is even impious (*nefas est*) to mention them.

The account ends (§12) with the general conclusion that the 'political' virtues also make us happy (*et politicis efficiuntur beati*) and that Cicero was thus right in the passage where the dream of Scipio is commented upon.<sup>41</sup> This is not a very convincing conclusion though, as the 'political' virtues in the Neoplatonist scale of virtues merely prepare for the higher levels of virtue that alone can provide the divinization of the soul and its happiness, and the 'political' virtues are thus instrumental, or provide merely the means for attaining happiness. On the other hand, it has been suggested that this might be all Macrobius is intending or claiming here, as he refers to 'political' virtues and actions as preparing their way to heaven.<sup>42</sup> But this does not seem very likely, since these references are merely recapitulations of the traditional positions of the Ciceronian text being commented on: that good rulers and other benefactors of the state get rewards in the afterlife, and they are thus not the conclusions following from the confrontation of these values with the Neoplatonist scale of virtues. Rather, the weakness of Macrobius's conclusions arguably emphasize the radical and, in some contexts, problematic content of the Neoplatonist theory of the virtues.

40 O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 45, with Porphyry, *Sentences*, 22,1–23,3; 25, 6–9, in Lamberz (ed.), *Porphyrii Sententiae*.

41 For Armisen-Marchetti, *Macrobe, ad loc.*, far from merely gathering well-known stock rhetorical points, Macrobius here attempts a substantial reconciliation of the Neoplatonists scale of virtues theory and Cicero's defence of traditional Roman values. I share this impression, though I see the attempt as a failure, particularly given that Macrobius fails to address the crucial point that the Neoplatonist scale of virtues, already in Plotinus's sketchy account in *Enneads* 11.1, involves the idea that the lower levels of virtue that do not yet imply that the soul is turned away from the aspects following its incarnation in a body, notably the emotions and their moderation, cannot produce or guarantee happiness.

42 O'Meara, *Platonopolis*, 81–2.

### Non-Philosophical Early Christian and Pagan Notions of Heroic Virtue

As has been observed in relation to Aristotle's hints about heroic virtue in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1, they may well simply reflect common beliefs attached to contemporary hero cults.<sup>43</sup>

Augustine, in *De civitate dei* x, depicts the pagan hero cults as the belief that heroes, that is, the departed souls of those who have distinguished themselves in this life, live in the air, as do 'the powers of the air' (Juno/Hera and the evil daemons). Apparently, these heroes cannot overpower the powers of the air, and may only succeed through suppliant gifts, to the powers of the air, perhaps a reference to one conception of how ritual sacrifice in particular works in the hero cults. The martyrs of the church, on the other hand, could, Augustine suggests, even though this is not the practice of the church, be called "our heroes", and by contrasts they *can* overpower the powers of the air, namely through the divine virtues (*virtutibus divinis*), as Scipio conquered Africa through his virtue.<sup>44</sup>

Augustine thus suggests a strong distinction between the elements of pagan belief and worship in heroes of great men on the one hand and the heroically suffering saints of early Christianity on the other, but this was by no means the only, or even the dominant, trend in Late Ancient Christianity.

Discussing the notion of heroes in a Christian setting was no invention by Augustine. As has been pointed out, analysing the early parallels and differences between the hero cults and early Christianity "reinforces the hardly novel notion that Christianity did not begin *ex nihilo* as a unique or entirely new religion in the Roman Empire."<sup>45</sup>

As for comparisons between hero cults and Jesus, it is true that the word 'hero' (ἥρως) is absent from the New Testament, and it has been argued that while the theme of a hero Christology was nevertheless already addressed in the New Testament, and while hero cults and worship were extremely common and even increasing, at least among the populace, in the world of early Christianity, early Christology on the contrary "consciously avoided developing veneration of Jesus Christ as a hero",<sup>46</sup> partly because such popular hero cults

43 See n. 2 above.

44 Augustine, *De civitate dei*. x.xxi.

45 Hershbell, "Heroikos," 172.

46 Hans D. Betz, "Hero Worship and Christian Beliefs: Observations from the History of Religion on Philostratus's *Heroikos*," 25–48 in Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (eds.), *Philostratus' Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third*

were all grave cults, and the empty grave theme of the Scripture thus made a hero cult impossible from the start.<sup>47</sup>

Others have emphasized that the missing body or empty grave motif were even common elements in pagan hero cults.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, there are significant early Christian and pagan examples of observations, and denials, of strong parallels between the hero cults and the figure of Jesus. For instance, the convert Justin Martyr (c.100–165) compared the heroes Hercules, Perseus, Asclepius, and Jesus.<sup>49</sup> The slightly later pagan, Celsus, if we are to believe the report in Origen's *Against Celsus*, attacked the Christian faith in the late second century precisely by arguing that Jesus's resurrection was not at all unique and claimed that it was simply one among many pagan heroes such as Orpheus, Hercules, Theseus, and Protesilaos that had resurrected in similar fashion, that is, they had disappeared for a time and then returned.<sup>50</sup>

Considering the perhaps most significant pagan hero, Hercules, also illustrates that patristic writers while perhaps not themselves tempting to call Jesus a 'hero', were aware of the Hercules cult and discussed it in the context of matters of heresy as well as in parallel to Jesus, and notably many of these parallels were not negative but positive, and the picture of Hercules at the crossroads was even used by Christians as an example to inspire Christians to martyrdom.<sup>51</sup>

It seems that while the earliest Christian treatments of Hercules and his cult were rather negative, in that they were polemical and apologetic, later Christian writers permitted more positive accounts.

Thus Justin Martyr, as we have seen made parallels between Jesus and Hercules, and these were rather positive comparisons, and so did other later writers such as Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nazianzus.<sup>52</sup> While there is perhaps no general consensus concerning the exact reasons for this

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*Century CE* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2004), 26, who discusses the phenomenon from the case of Flavius Philostratus's dialogue *Heroikos*.

47 Betz, "Hero Worship," 46–7.

48 E.g. Lawrence M. Wills, *The quest for the historical gospel: Mark, John, and the Origins of the Gospel genre* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 48, gives as examples the hero cults of Amphiaraios and Oedipus. See also Hershebell, "Heroikos," 171 f.

49 Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, 54; *Dialogue with Trypho*, 69, quoted by Wills, *Historical Gospel*, 33.

50 See Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.56, referring to Celsus' *True doctrine*, from ca. 178–180, with Hershebell, "Heroikos," 171.

51 See Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 11, with Abraham J. Malherbe, "Herakles," 574–5, in Theodor Klauser, et al., (eds.), *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988) 574; Hershebell, "Heroikos," 173.

52 Malherbe, "Herakles," 574–5.

positive reception among some Christian writers, it has been suggested that Hercules, by being an example of a hero not only travelling to Hades and getting out of there, but moreover bringing people with him back to life, may have been seen as an example to make the Christian case stronger for the possibility of resurrection and the overcoming of death.<sup>53</sup>

On the negative side, in the context of heresy, Tertullian (c.160–240) attacked Marcion's view that Jesus had both a human and a divine father arguing precisely that such a view would imply that Jesus was just another Hercules,<sup>54</sup> that is, just another pagan hero. Later, Jerome argued that Christians must not worship Hercules, which seems to imply that some contemporary Christians actually did worship Hercules and view themselves as Christians.<sup>55</sup>

Another comparison is the one between Jesus and the hero Protesilaos,<sup>56</sup> who is particularly well treated in Flavius Philostratus's third-century CE work *Heroikos*. Both the stories of Jesus and Protesilaos included their resurrections, and in fact two resurrections are attributed to Protesilaos. This fact, already well known in antiquity, bothered some Christian writers to such an extent that they felt the need to question the resurrection of Protesilaos so as to highlight the resurrection of Jesus as unique.<sup>57</sup> It is easy to see many such aspects in which these forms of pagan hero cults challenged the claim by Christians of the uniqueness of Jesus. This is also highlighted by Flavius Philostratus's account of Apollonius of Tyana, mentioned before, as a teacher of wisdom, awakening people from death, and, moreover, able, through having joined the gods, to disappear at trial, and reappear in other places, in a way similar to the Christian resurrection theme.

Hershbell in a recent study suggests that even though Jesus was not explicitly called a 'hero' by early Christians, the later comparisons and parallels in Christian and pagan writers discussed above suggest "Jesus may have been venerated as a hero by some early Christians".<sup>58</sup>

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53 Hershbell, "Heroikos," 173.

54 Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.10.7, with Malherbe, "Herakles," 578.

55 Jerome, *Letters* 2.13.8. This fact, Hershbell, "Heroikos," 172–3 argues, "suggests that this hero and his cult were not far removed from Christian daily life", i.e. implying that the patristic writers' knowledge of this cult was not strictly based on literary sources.

56 The first of the Achaeans to die at Troy in the *Iliad*.

57 Ellen Bradshaw Aiken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (eds.), *Flavius Philostratus Heroikos* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), liii–liv. Cf. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 11.

58 Hershbell, "Heroikos," 176.

Moreover, the accounts of pagan heroes, their apotheosis and resurrections, is likely to be reflected in some aspects of the Neoplatonist theory of the scale of virtues analysed above, and particularly in the tendency from Porphyry (*Sentences* ch. 32) onward, to depict the individual or the soul that has and exercises the ‘purificatory’ virtues as “a daemonic man, or even a good daemon” and the one on the contemplative level above this one as ‘a god’.

Eitrem suggested for the case of Philostratus *Heroikos* that it followed the following scheme in the account of the hero:<sup>59</sup>

1. Heroes have a higher status than souls of the dead because of a special ἀναβίωσις (lit. ‘a return to life again’), and they enjoy direct association or communion (συνουσία) with the gods, and so heroes have achieved the gift of infallible prophecy.
2. As heroes have attained by their ‘resurrection’ a higher level of existence, so human beings can, because of their ‘piety’ (θεοσέβεια) and the gods’ corresponding favor (θεοφιλία), attain communion with the gods.

As has been pointed out, this classification may conflate the notions of resurrection and of apotheosis,<sup>60</sup> but it still helps us to see some interesting parallels to the Neoplatonist theories discussed earlier. Notably, the theme, partly common to the Gospel’s account of Jesus and the accounts of the above mentioned pagan hero cults, of the individual having joined the gods, or attained a divine superhuman level of virtue and thus being able to awaken the dead or generally act as a healer of others, whether in the spiritual sense or in the sense of medical healing, as was frequent in the case of Christian saints,<sup>61</sup> finds a parallel in the Neoplatonist scale of virtues where the soul may, for various reasons, ‘return’ to practising the practical or ‘political’ virtues and actions in order to serve the rest of society.<sup>62</sup>

59 Eitrem, “Philostratus *Heroikos*,” 29, as translated by Hershbell, “*Heroikos*,” 174.

60 Hershbell, “*Heroikos*,” 175.

61 Hershbell, “*Heroikos*,” 177.

62 On this theme in Neoplatonism, O’Meara, *Platonopolis*, ch. 7, with John M. Dillon and John F. Finamore, *Iamblichus: De Anima, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2002), *Introduction*. Hershbell, “*Heroikos*,” 175 claims that the Platonic apotheosis or deification of the soul of e.g. a departed hero or emperor are different from the Judaeo-Christian notion of bodily resurrection, and that Greeks and Romans had difficulties in accepting the early Christian belief in bodily resurrection, and quotes much literature establishing this. At the same time, it should be stressed that at a technical level, the Middle-Platonist and Neoplatonist theory of metempsychosis provided a somewhat

As for the comparison between hero cults and Christian martyrs and saints, rather than Jesus specifically, there seem to have been much less focus among Christian writers on establishing the uniqueness of the Christian figures. Although there may not have existed any notion of a Christian saint in the later sense or any formal procedure for declaring anyone a saint in the early third century, both pagan philosophers, heroes and Christian personalities including Jesus were covered by the notion of 'holy men'.<sup>63</sup> While there is no consensus on the exact relation between the early martyrs and saints and the pagan hero cults, it is clear that many parallels can be identified in all these cults. Perhaps the most evident aspects are the location of the cults to a specific place, mostly the grave, and the attribution of medical and psychological healing powers to heroes and martyrs in response to prayers and veneration, and there are cases of pagan hero cults being transferred into Christian cults.<sup>64</sup>

By the third century it seems that the Christian cults had come to include significant Christians who were not martyrs, thus developing a notion of sainthood separate from the martyrdom of the early Christians, and while these saints are called 'heroes', Augustine later reveals,<sup>65</sup> if not invents, a tendency to apply the name of 'hero' to Christian martyrs, though he is clearly reluctant to do so, as it was not yet the linguistic practice of the church. This tendency is more clearly shown in grave inscriptions.<sup>66</sup>

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parallel way for accounting for the 'return' of purified souls into a body, in order to, by exercising 'political' virtues, communicate the divine into human affairs. For a Middle-Platonist account of this, see Alcinoüs, *Didascalicus* chapter II, 153.3–15 (2nd/3rd century AD), with John Whittaker and Pierre Louis, *Alcinoüs: enseignement des doctrines de Platon*, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990), 77, n. 23.

63 Thus, as discussed by Hershbell, "Heroikos," 176, n. 32, following Theofried Baumeister, "Heiligenverehrung I," 96–150, in Klauser et al., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988), 97, while ἥγιος was e.g. by Paul used for all Christians, and this term and *sanctus* soon became the terminology for those Christians associated with a cult, it was initially applied to martyrs, i.e. those who died witnessing to their faith, and from the fourth century onwards applied to monastics and bishops as well.

64 Baumeister, "Heiligenverehrung," 104, with Hershbell, "Heroikos," 177.

65 Augustine, *City of God* 10.21.

66 See the examples given by Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, *Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Antiquity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 3, with Hershbell, "Heroikos," 178. As Wolfgang Speyer, "Heros," 861–77 in Theodor Klauser, et al., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1988), 875, notes on the contrary that the term 'hero' was applied to a number of persons from Hebrew scriptures, even to Moses.

## Conclusions

Was it far-fetched for medieval commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, such as Albert the Great, to attempt to spell out the non-conclusive account of a notion of heroic virtue in Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1) by using the Neoplatonist scale of virtues, with its level of the virtues of the purified souls (termed by Macrobius *virtutes purgati animi*) and to attempt a sort of fusion of this notion of a heroic level of virtue with the, as it were, pre-philosophical notions of the extreme level of virtue depicted in martyrs and saints from early Christianity onwards, long before the rediscovery and introduction of Aristotle's ethics to the Latin west?

The answer, I believe, in the light of the discussion above, should be that it was not far-fetched at all. First of all, one may note that while Aristotle at *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.1 does not give, and perhaps does not intend to give, any philosophically tenable meaning or role to the notion of heroic virtue in the ethical theory he presents, the account of the contemplative life in *Nicomachean Ethics* x, and the distinction between practical and theoretical virtues as such, indicates one possible direction for the development of such an endeavour. As the Neoplatonic theory of the scale of virtues developed the original Platonic distinctions between different levels of virtues much further than Aristotle, it is thus not far-fetched for the later commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to use that theory in order to give some meaning to the notion of superhuman virtue, whether Aristotle actually intended it to play any particular role in his theory at all.

Further, though the Neoplatonist sources discussed here did not explicitly depict the divine and superhuman levels of virtue as 'heroic', and even if the two terms heroic and divine were not synonymous, they had close associations and moreover, the word heroic as used in the widespread popular hero cults implied attributing a divine aspect to the subject in question.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, it seems that both the philosophical Neoplatonist development of a technical theory of the scale of virtues, as well as the development within the church of a more systematic notion of Christian martyrs, and saints, including the divine and human status of Jesus himself, both drew on popular beliefs and the pagan hero cults of the Roman Empire.

Though it falls outside the scope of this paper to fully pursue this here, there are, as we have seen, numerous indications that the depiction of the Neoplatonist sage or philosopher, and in later post-Iamblichean Neoplatonism,

67 Eitrem, "Philostrats Heroikos," 4, n. 1, argues that the term heroic (ἥρωικός) through the third century AD had its old associations with the term divine (θεῖος).



the theurg, who alone through rituals can help the individual supersede philosophy and reach true happiness and blessedness and unity with god or the highest forms of—superhuman—being, just as the function of the early Christian martyr or saint, whose divine healing powers are accessible through the ritual of prayer, is but one aspect that originally developed, and perhaps borrowed its credibility, from the traditional hero cults of the Roman Empire. Already in this context, the account of these heroes served the function of *exempla* and implied superhuman qualities of the heroes, perhaps unattainable for the many, and yet inspiring the many to follow a similar path.

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# Heroic Virtue in Medieval Liturgy

*Nils Holger Petersen*

## **Introduction: Medieval Liturgies of Saints and Aristotelian Heroic Virtue**

The purpose of the following pages is to discuss the relationship between the notion of heroic virtue as put forward by Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.1.1 on the one hand and moral religious ideals expressed in medieval devotions on the other. I shall give examples showing how liturgical celebrations of some saints involved moral ideals, considered to be saintly, which corresponded to and filled a similar function to the notion of heroic virtue.

As pointed out in the Introduction, and as further discussed by Erik Eliasson in his chapter on the Late Ancient development of the notion of heroic virtue, this notion was only sketched ambiguously by Aristotle, and was then further developed in Platonism, Neoplatonism, as well as by Late Ancient Christian writers such as Porphyry, Iamblichus and Augustine, each in their own way and all much influenced by Neoplatonism.

Thus, not least considering the huge impact of Augustine's writings as well as his church practices (recorded to a high extent through Augustine's sermons) for medieval (and later) theology and liturgy, it is not surprising that ideas about Christian saintly virtue that also corresponded to a received notion of heroic virtue can be found in the liturgies of medieval saints. In this chapter, however, I shall only briefly sketch a connection between the early Christian saint and the divine hero in a pagan Aristotelian sense, in order to explore more fully to what extent parallel ideals of heroic virtue are found in liturgies of medieval saints. In other words, the kind of reception history involved here is not one of a straightforward conscious application of the Aristotelian notion, but a mixed historical narrative of appropriation and further development. This development was influenced from many sides, in analogy with what happened with the Aristotelian notion itself.

## **Christian Saints as Christian 'Heroes'**

In early Christianity, as pointed out by Erik Eliasson in the aforementioned chapter, a discourse existed concerning saints as Christian heroes, although this idea was qualified in a number of ways. Thus, not least, Augustine clearly

distinguished between pagan heroes and Christian saints, at the same time as he suggested that saints could be called “our heroes”.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction has been corroborated in retrospect by Peter Brown, one of the major contemporary academic authorities on saints’ cults in pre-modernity. Brown has made it clear that there was a fundamental difference between the pagan cults of heroes and the Christian cults of martyrs. The Christian perception of martyrs built on their intimacy with God, as this was manifested through their deaths as human beings. Pointing also to adverse statements about the Christian saints’ cults by Julian the Apostate in the mid-fourth century, Brown has made the following summarizing statement:

The martyr was the ‘friend of God.’ He was an intercessor in a way which the hero could never have been. Thus, in Christian belief, the grave, the memory of the dead, and the religious ceremonial that might surround this memory were placed within a totally different structure of relations between God, the dead, and the living.<sup>2</sup>

This, however, does not preclude that similarities between the concepts or mutual influences between these cults and notions might be found. Indeed, Brown acknowledges possible architectural influences on the early Christian *memoria* from grave houses built for heroes.<sup>3</sup>

Still, the implication would seem to be that one should not expect to find any direct reflection of the notion of heroic virtue in Christian devotional texts. Moreover (and as also noticed by Eliasson), while Augustine suggested that the martyrs could be called “our heroes,” one should also note his qualification, “if the ecclesiastical way of speaking would have allowed it”,<sup>4</sup> thus implying that such a terminology would have been regarded as improper. This is not surprising in itself considering the general suspicion of anything pagan in the early church.

What I want to suggest in this chapter is not at all that Christian saints were similar to heroes of late antiquity, nor, as already stated, that the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue had a direct reception in saints’ offices (or, more generally, in medieval liturgical offices altogether). The point is much more limited: in medieval saints’ offices, saints, and their deeds and moral characters, are

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1 Eliasson (this volume), at n. 44, and see Augustine, *De civitate dei* (x, xxi).

2 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 5–7 (quotation p. 6).

3 Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 6.

4 “si ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudo pateretur.” Augustine, *De civitate dei* (x, xxi).

sometimes presented in ways that strongly conjure notions of heroic virtue, as will be exemplified further below. I would also contend that there are good reasons for such similarities of characterization. This is already implied by the aforementioned discourse in antiquity, which shows an awareness that saints were in some ways Christian heroes: they were, after all, men and women who, in their particular ways, had victoriously (although in a Christian sense, involving suffering and martyrdom, which, of course, was different from what could have concerned pagan heroes) fought for values like truth, love, goodness and chastity. In these values, early Christianity did not deviate very much from the moral ideas expressed by Stoic and Platonic philosophers.<sup>5</sup>

What came to the fore in saints' legends about their earthly lives and deeds, in early as well as medieval (and later) Christianity, are their struggles against evil as such or evil forces. This would always concern holding on to Christian faith even in the face of torture and death, and it would also often include a focus on moral values and strengths, as we shall see. Thus, a saint's legend would show the patience and endurance of the saintly person while he or she was tortured to death or in other ways confronted with violence. These descriptions easily amount to superhuman forms of self-control that have an obvious similarity to heroic virtue.<sup>6</sup> It must be remembered, of course, that such superhuman virtues were also important main ingredients in the passion narrative of Christ, fundamental especially to the liturgy of Lent and Holy Week, but ultimately also to the annual liturgical celebrations as a whole (not least in the Eucharistic liturgy, which always involved the passion of Christ). This included martyrs' days since the passions of the martyrs were generally in some way modelled on the Passion of Christ. Indeed, such ingredients were crucial elements in most devotional Christian texts.

Narratives (legends) about saints seem to have been incorporated into the liturgical readings for saints' celebrations early on. Liturgical songs served to further emphasize and celebrate the virtues brought out in the narratives. In general, this can be documented for the centuries following the Carolingian liturgical reforms for which increasing amounts of liturgical materials have been preserved, including many so-called rhymed saints' offices (or *historiae*) giving poetic texts and music for (much of) the sung liturgy of a saint's day.

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5 Cf. the recent and ongoing discussions in biblical exegesis concerning St Paul and Stoicism, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000) and Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismio Dunderberg (eds.), *Stoicism in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). See also Eliasson (this volume), at n. 5.

6 See above, Introduction.

Such offices were produced in increasing quantities from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The liturgical readings for the nocturns (parts of matins, the nightly prayers of the Divine Office) were taken from a saint's legend. So-called responsories were sung after these readings, textually emphasizing important topics.<sup>7</sup> However, already in Augustine's time, at the Third Council of Carthage in 397, it was decided that the passions of the martyrs could be read in the liturgy for the celebrations of martyrs' days as an exception to the otherwise stated rule that only biblical readings (from the newly delimited biblical canon) were allowed.<sup>8</sup> Thus from early on, the narratives about the struggles of the martyrs had been considered important enough to be incorporated into the annual round of liturgical celebrations. Throughout the Middle Ages (and within the Catholic Church beyond this period) such saints' narratives were thus integrated into a ritual framework of performative devotional events confirming and reinforcing the religious identity of individual Christians as well as shaping a cultural memory, and a cultural and religious communal identity, for whole communities sharing the cult of the saint in question. In this way, the authority of the ideals, which came to the fore in the readings, was further strengthened.

One must be aware of how difficult it is to arrive at a valid description of general characteristics for medieval saints all over Latin Christendom, considering that popular views (to the little extent we are able to assess them) sometimes seem to have diverged from official ecclesiastical, theological opinions. This has been pointed out by André Vauchez. Sainthood ideals and models seem to have varied according to geography and time, so that no real typology of sainthood can safely be claimed, apart from probably the most important (transcendent) saintly quality: to produce miracles. In the north, saints of the higher classes seem to have been more common than in the south. Royal saints

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7 See Thomas J. Heffernan and E. Ann Matter (eds.), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), Thomas J. Heffernan, "The Liturgy and the Literature of Saints' Lives," in Heffernan and Matter (eds.), *The Liturgy of the Medieval Church*, 73–105 and John Harper, *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 86–97, for general knowledge about saints' offices and saints' legends see also Arnold Angenendt, (*Heilige und Reliquien: Die Geschichte ihres Kultes vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (Hamburg: Nikol, 2007), and see also John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) for a discussion of rhymed offices.

8 See Nils Holger Petersen, "Memorial Ritual and the Writing of History," in *The Writing of History in Scandinavia 1050–1200 and its European Context*, Sigbjørn Sønnesyn (ed.), (Durham: PIMS, forthcoming) with further references.

seem to have exhibited characteristics bringing to mind the basic superhuman virtues of self-control, restraint and endurance. Based in particular on his studies of materials from the canonization processes of the later Middle Ages (where such materials begin to exist mainly from the thirteenth century onwards), Vauchez has highlighted a plethora of criteria that are important for recognizing Christian merits.<sup>9</sup> These, however, are too varied to make it possible to define in greater detail what should constitute saintly heroic virtue. On the other hand, as already pointed out, the actual patience and restraint of the martyrs in connection with their passion must be considered to be one basic element saintly virtues and heroic virtue have in common.

### Heroic Saintly Virtues

In 1116 (or possibly 1117), Earl Magnus of the Orkney Islands was brutally murdered by his cousin Earl Hakon as a result of a political strife, seemingly a power struggle. Earl Hakon wanted to be the sole ruler of the islands, which they had been forced to rule together by the Norwegian king after a conflict. Historically, it is problematic to claim that Magnus was a martyr for the Christian faith (which they shared, at least outwardly). Even so, this is exactly what is found in the Icelandic *Orkneyinga Saga*, the oldest preserved narrative about the martyrdom of Magnus, probably written around 1200. It presents Magnus as a Christ-like figure, who was even chaste in his marriage. He is presented as peaceful and trusting, and in these respects completely the opposite of his cousin. When he is killed, he is described as letting himself be slaughtered, passively but bravely and without resistance, with clear references to the Passion of Jesus. In the narrative that lies behind the saint's liturgy for Magnus, he is constructed as a saint, with particular focus on the superhuman virtues of restraint, patience as well as through his peacefulness.<sup>10</sup> It is hard to imagine that the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue could have been familiar to the narrator or editor of the narrative, so it is probably more to the point to think of these coincidences as parallel, rather than historically connected, phenomena. The direct influence is biblical but also marked by moral issues debated in Christian theology since antiquity, traditions shaped to a high degree by

9 André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the later Middle Ages*, trans. by Jean Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. Chapter 17, "The Life and Virtues of Saints in the Processes of Canonization," 499–526, cf. Chapter 10, "Local Sainthood," 157–245.

10 Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (eds. and trans.), *Orkneyinga Saga: the History of the Earls of Orkney* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 83–108.



Neoplatonically oriented theologians of the first centuries of the CE, and in particular by Augustine, as is a commonplace in the history of theology.

That Magnus is heroically virtuous, and not only an emulation of Christ, comes to the fore when Magnus is described as a hero of peace. During a battle on board the ship of the Norwegian king he refuses to take part in the fight because he has no quarrel with the people attacked by the king. He is accused of cowardice but proves his heroic virtue by standing passively singing psalms on the deck of the ship as an easy target for arrows from all sides. Similarly, it is pointed out that after he has been taken captive by Earl Hakon, his negotiation with the earl about his fate are not due to a fear of being killed but rather an attempt to save Hakon from committing a deadly sin.<sup>11</sup>

Gunilla Iversen has discussed the literary construction of the figure of St Olav in various offices for the saint composed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Olav (King Olav Haraldson of Norway) was arguably the most important Scandinavian saint during the Middle Ages. He was martyred at Stiklestad near Trondheim in Norway in 1030, and was credited with having Christianized Norway. His cult in Norway (and Scandinavia) seems mainly to have developed in connection with the establishment of an archbishopric in the 1150s in Trondheim (medieval Nidaros), where a new office was composed, probably in conjunction with the new building programme for the Nidaros Cathedral.<sup>12</sup> Iversen has compared skaldic poems preserved in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (dated to the first half of the thirteenth century) to the characterizations in the liturgical offices. The emerging images are rather different. In the *Heimskringla*, the image of Olav is that of a Viking warrior fighting with less emphasis on virtues except those that make him a good warrior. His opponents are not mythologized as evil men, but seem to have their own dignity; they are respected in similar ways to warriors.<sup>13</sup> In the various readings and songs from the different versions of the offices, on the other hand, he is a Christian missionary and a just king. Here one finds expressions to characterize Olav such as "righteous as a lion, full of confidence and without fear, and following the example of Job, he was not afraid of the multitude nor feared the contempt of

11 Pálsson and Edwards (eds.), *Orkneyinga Saga*, 84 and 93–94.

12 Gunilla Iversen, "Transforming a Viking into a Saint," in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages: Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 401–29, and Eyolf Østrem, *The Office of St Olav: A Study in Chant Transmission* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Library, 2001).

13 Iversen, "Transforming a Viking," 418.



his own kinsmen" (third responsory from matins) followed by the verse "He offered himself to perils and did not refuse to accept martyrdom."<sup>14</sup>

Iversen concludes by pointing out that we have no way of knowing the historical truth about King Olav, but we can see how his narrative was appropriated in various ways: for example, in what seems to have been (at least to some extent) an original warrior context in the *Heimskringla*, in which the dignity is fundamentally connected with the ability to fight and the bravery involved in fighting, and in the different layers of the offices for the saint, where he is presented as the eternally just king, and a willing martyr for Christianity. Since the original Aristotelian presentation of the notion of heroic virtue is vague (as pointed out from the outset of this chapter), what can be claimed to be in agreement more specifically with the Aristotelian notion is the opposition between the beastly and the human, in a way that surpasses the normal capacity of humans, thus such a heroic virtue becomes divine, superhuman. As portrayed in the liturgical offices, Olav is distinguished from those who kill him through his justice and lack of fear, to the degree that makes the martyrdom possible.

The virtues of both St Magnus and St Olav are based on their superhuman capacity to hold on to moral values, thus vastly separating the saints from beastly fights for wealth, power or life. The virtues can be seen as distinctly Christian, and they are, of course, but they can also be seen as expressions of moral attitudes, describable in general human terms, which were the outcome of a synthesis of Christian belief and Greek thought, a synthesis that shaped the Roman-Christian world after the Constantinian turn of the fourth century. Thus, the claim is that the saintly superhuman virtues encountered in many—all?—medieval saints owe their characteristics to an integrated reception of Christian narrative and Greek thought, ultimately also based on moral ideals developed from the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue. It is the combination of the superhuman and the rational—the 'unbeastly'—that goes beyond a mere emulation of a Christian archetypical narrative and seems related to, and, through a long complicated reception history, even connected to, the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue.

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14 Iversen, "Transforming a Viking," 41, giving also the Latin text: "Iustus vero ut leo confidens absque terrore et iuxta exemplum sancti Iob, non expavescebat ad multitudinem nimiam: nec desectio propinquorum terrebat eum. v. Offerebat se sponte periculis: martirium suscipere non recusans."

## The Heroic Virtue of St Knud Lavard

Another clear image of heroic virtue emerges from what may be the originally composed offices for St Knud Lavard, the Danish prince and son of King Eric the Good, who was murdered by his cousin Prince Magnus in 1131. King Eric died when Knud was still a child. Eric's brother, Niels, Magnus's father, was king at the time of the murder, which seems to have been caused by Magnus's jealousy and fear of Knud, who in the meantime had become duke of Schleswig near the Danish-German border, and was a strong contender for the Danish throne. As in the case of Earl Magnus from Orkney, it is historically difficult to talk about martyrdom for the Christian faith. Both Duke Knud and Prince Magnus were (of course) Christians and we are unable to make a well-founded historical judgment about the underlying conflict between the cousins. The point in the context of my argument is, however, not so much its relation to historical truth, but the question of how Knud was constructed as a saint in the aftermath of the murder, and, moreover, in the aftermath of the civil war that followed the murder through decades of power struggle between various fractions of the royal family. Knud's son Valdemar had been born a week after the murder. He finally won the civil war in 1157, and stood behind the appeal to Pope Alexander III to pronounce Knud a saint. In 1169, the pope issued a bull authorizing the canonization of Knud, which took place in 1170.<sup>15</sup>

In the First Vespers of the office for the day of Knud's death (to be held on the eve of the martyr day, 7 January, thus coinciding with the Feast of Epiphany), a responsory characterizes Knud in the following way: "The duke, a just judge, a lion to the cruel, but to the mild a lamb" ("Dux iudex iustus sevis leo, mitibus agnus").<sup>16</sup> The Knud Lavard legend is preserved through the readings of the liturgical offices for 7 January as well as for the day of the translation (25 June), in a single manuscript of the thirteenth century, now in Kiel Universitätsbibliothek.<sup>17</sup> Chronicles of the (long) twelfth century tell basically the same story as the legend, the most famous among such versions is that of Saxo in his *Gesta Danorum* written around 1200.

15 Nils Holger Petersen, "Theological Construction in the Offices in Honour of St Knud Lavard," in *Music of War*, Roman Hankeln (ed.), *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 23 (2014), no. 1, 71–96; see also Thomas Riis, "The Historical Background of the Liturgy of St Knud Lavard," in John Bergsagel, *The Offices and Masses of St. Knud Lavard* 2 vols. (Copenhagen and Ottawa: The Royal Library and Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2010).

16 Bergsagel (ed.), *The Offices and Masses*, vol. 2, 2–3.

17 Facsimile and transcription in Bergsagel (ed.), *The Offices and Masses*, with further discussion in Bergsagel's Introduction, vol. 2, xxxi–xlili.

According to the liturgical readings (that is, the legend), Knud did not carry weapons (this, however, is slightly differently presented in Saxo's version), believing he was having a friendly meeting with Magnus, just the two of them. Also, in this account, Knud did not try to resist Magnus and his men who, in an act of treachery, had brought weapons and, indeed, lured Knud into an ambush. Accordingly, the homiletic lesson nine (third nocturn for the Office of the Passion) summarizes the situation in the following way:

For the evil counsels of the ungodly are revealed when they persecute the righteous. Thus, those cruel men craftily greeted Duke Knud, veiling their hatred with pretended friendship, but when they brutally fell upon him with weapons their secret deceits rushed forth into the light.<sup>18</sup>

This, together with the following response, "The righteous one prospers in all his ways; but within his own land a foe is stirred up against him, and for his good deeds he is sold to death", constructs Knud as a just man innocently assaulted.<sup>19</sup> His death is Christ-like, and his justice and righteousness are further elaborated through details about how he did not favour his own kin as a duke, how he restored peace and prosperity in his dukedom, and how he refused to think badly or even to have suspicions about Magnus when he was warned about Magnus's treachery. When Magnus, in lesson eight in the Office of the Passion, is about to slay him in anger, Knud keeps calm and restrained, appealing to brotherhood, and ultimately to God's judgment; all, of course, to no avail:

[...] the duke, like an innocent lamb led to the slaughter, looked around him, saw the armed men, and said: 'brother, God the omniscient knows that I have never said or performed anything that might prejudice you and yours! Why then have you done this? Where is our pact, where is our trust, where is our true brotherhood? Let Him judge between us who

18 English translation, Michael Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy of St Knud Lavard* (Copenhagen: The Arnamagnæan Commission and Reitzel, 2003), 158, Latin text, Bergsagel (ed.), *The Offices and Masses*, vol. 2, 36: "Nam praua consilia impiorum reuelata sunt in persecucione iustorum. Sic seui dum ducem Kanutum in dolo solutabant, odium simulata amicitia uelabant. Dum uero in eum armis crudeliter irruerunt, doli latentes in lucem proruperunt."

19 English translation, Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy*, 153; Latin text in Bergsagel (ed.), (2010), vol. 2, 19, "In vijs suis omnibus, iustus prosperatur; contra quem domesticus hostis incitatur. \* Et pro bonis actibus, morti mancipatur."

rewards all according to their deserts.' At this point the saint tried to stand up, but the traitor dishonourably pulled him back by the hood on his cape, drew his sword, and split his head from the left ear to the right eye, thus impiously uncovering the martyr's brain.<sup>20</sup>

It is precisely Knud's restraint and honesty that are emphasized in the verse of the response that follows this lesson: "Prudent in deed and honest in his words, he was truly pleasing to God and gentle to men."<sup>21</sup>

One may point to many more similar textual expressions of Knud's virtues and saintly personality. Altogether, and as in the previous examples, the point is not to claim that the ideals and ideas I have pointed to here are a direct reception of a notion of heroic virtue. I have intended to point to the similarity between the understanding of the human and earthly side of Knud's saintliness and the notion of heroic virtue. In terms of the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue, in all its vagueness, the crux of the matter is—as argued before—the combination of the superhuman in the unwavering steadfastness of his moral rationality which can be seen—and was seen (or constructed)—as beyond normal human capacity, and thus divine, but at the same time as completely opposite the beastly, which cannot go beyond its own narrow interests or instincts.

In addition to this, in a sense, human characterization of Knud, of course, comes his election as a member of the heavenly host of saints, including the miracles, he, as a saint, has been given the power to perform to those who venerate him. Such ideas and beliefs, of course, are beyond the notion of heroic virtue. But it seems to me that Knud as a person, before becoming a heavenly saint who can perform miracles and intercede on behalf of his flock, the Danish people, may be described as a man with heroic virtue, and therefore attaining, beyond his martyrdom, a divine, unearthly condition.

Furthermore, the music of the liturgical offices seems also to emphasize the most important keywords of the texts by way of melodic highpoints and the

20 English translation, Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy*, 152, Latin text, Bergsagel (ed.), *The Offices and Masses*, vol. 2, 17: "[...] dux, tamquam ovis innocens ad mactandum ductus, circumspiciens armatos aspexit et ait: 'Frater, scit, qui omnia nouit, me tibi aut tuis uerbo uel opere numquam obfuisse; et quid hoc fecisti? Ubi fedus, ubi fides, ubi uera fraternitas? Iudicet inter nos, qui reddet unicuique iuxta opera sua.' In hoc sanctus surgere uoluit; set per cappe capucium traditor eum indigne retrahens extracto gladio ab aure sinistra in dextrum oculum caput findit et martyris cerebrum impie denudauit."

21 English translation, Chesnutt, *The Medieval Danish Liturgy*, 152, Latin text, Bergsagel (ed.), *The Offices and Masses*, vol. 2, 18: "Providus in opera, verax in sermonibus, vere Deo placuit et dulcis hominibus."

distribution of melismas, thus corroborating the image of Knud as interpreted through the words.<sup>22</sup>

A literary reception of Knud Lavard, at least concerning the broader outline of the narrative, dependent on the legend known from the liturgical offices, the *Ludus de sancto canuto duce*, is preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen in a unique manuscript, Thott 1409 4to, probably copied in 1574, therefore after the Danish Reformation. It is a large saint's play honouring the Danish duke, Knud Lavard.<sup>23</sup> The genre of saint's plays to which it seems to belong, as well as the larger genre that is generally termed 'liturgical drama' in the Middle Ages, ultimately grew out of complex experimentations during the High Middle Ages with representational techniques that gradually established a devotional theatre even outside of the church.<sup>24</sup> The *Ludus de sancto canuto duce* may be a Lutheran revision of an earlier Latin saint's play. In the manuscript, the rubrics are in Latin, but the spoken lines in Danish. There is only one song included in the manuscript (with musical notation) and everything else is spoken. Thus, in terms of genre, the play as it has been preserved may have moved rather far away from its original genre, if the reception history I am suggesting, is a correct assumption. Another surprising fact about the play is that there are no prayers to the saint, nor any other traits that would make of the play a devotional act for the saint; there are no descriptions of Knud's sanctity beyond what would also be normal for a pious and honest Lutheran Christian. This may be taken to corroborate the idea that the play is a Lutheran revision of an earlier medieval saint's play.

The narrative, as presented in the liturgical offices, however, has not been changed in any substantial way in the play. There are a few minor differences, but they all primarily point in the direction of a more naturalistic presentation of Knud, and do not in any way change the characterization of his human virtues: all the (superhuman) virtues mentioned before are also present in the play.

Through a long and complex historical reception, notions similar to the notion of heroic virtue, which came to the fore in the saint's liturgy for Knud

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion in Petersen, "Theological Construction".

<sup>23</sup> See Nils Holger Petersen, "The Image of St. Knud Lavard in his Medieval Saints Offices and its Historical Impact," in *Of Chronicles and Kings*, John Bergsagel (ed.), (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, forthcoming) with further references.

<sup>24</sup> The literature on "liturgical drama" is vast, see Nils Holger Petersen, "Liturgical Drama," (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), [Online]. Available at <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396584/obo-9780195396584-0045.xml> (accessed 28 June 2012).

Lavard, and with the same function as the notion of heroic virtue, are also found in this Danish Early Modern play. Indeed, the medieval liturgies of saints here seem to have fed these notions and values and further developed an artistic, seemingly more secular, devotional context. Unfortunately, nothing is known about performances of the play in its own time.

### Conclusion

What has been presented here is a sketch attempting to point out how saintly virtues as presented in medieval liturgical saints' narratives can be understood as analogous to an Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue, through their combination of moral ('unbeastly') rationality and (divine) superhuman capacity. At the same time, it has been important to point out that this analogy, which should not be understood as a direct reception of the Aristotelian notion, could very likely be viewed from the perspective of a Christian reception history based on the early Christian synthesis of Greek philosophy and biblical narrative and belief.

The saints chosen in this article are all Nordic royal male saints. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss to what extent the conclusions made here are valid also for broader categories of saints. However, one more Nordic example may be mentioned briefly, which at least broadens the saintly category somewhat: the Norwegian St Sunniva, celebrated locally in Bergen and on the island of Selja off the west coast of Norway. A purported queen of Ireland (but with no known historical basis) arrived on the islands of Selja and Kinn, according to the legend preserved in (or written for) the Norwegian cult of St Sunniva, fleeing with her followers from a tyrant forcing her to marry him. According to the legend, Sunniva was a model of chastity, poverty, and faith, and her cult emphasizes these pious ideals, as well as her arrival from a foreign place. She is—as are her (anonymous) followers—steadfast and rational in her ideals, against the ferocious and seemingly beastly as yet unconverted Norwegians who cause her voluntary death in a cave. In this steadfastness she is beyond normal human capacity, thus seen as divinely inspired.<sup>25</sup>

Again, this can be understood in analogy to what is vaguely described by the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue just as well as it can be seen as a rather

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25 See the discussion of the legend and the cult in Nils Holger Petersen, "Locality and Distance in Cults of Saints in Medieval Norway," in *Hibernia cantans: Music and Liturgy of the Early Irish Church and the Veneration of Irish Saints in the Divine Office in Medieval Europe*, Ann Buckley (ed.), (Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

typical example of medieval saintliness. Even though St Sunniva's narrative identity is quite different from the narrative identities of St Magnus, St Olav, and St Knud Lavard, the way she is constructed as a saint, as a saintly heroic person, can be seen, just as it has been argued for the three royal male saints, as a construction of a person with the Aristotelian notion of heroic virtue. The point is that understanding a saint, through his or her cult, in both these ways, does not express a contradiction, but rather the fundamental influence of Greek thought for European Christianity and its religious rituals. This should in no way be seen as an opposition to a biblical Christian tradition, but rather as inextricably connected with it through the long and complex history of the appropriations of Greek philosophy within Christian thought and practice.

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# Aristotle's Heroic Virtue and Medieval Theories of Monarchy

*Biörn Tjällén*

On what grounds can one man claim to govern the rest, as a king does in his kingdom? Giles of Rome (d. 1316), author of the most popular political tract of the Middle Ages, argued that social and political pre-eminence should come with outstanding virtue. In a kingdom, the nobles ought to be more virtuous than the commoners, and nobles and commoners alike live under a king who should be virtue personified, almost a god:

A kingdom can be defined as a large multitude in which there are many nobles and freeborn living according to virtue and under one man who is the best, such as a king. [...] But if all citizens should be virtuous, as maintained by the Philosopher in *Politics*, someone who surpasses others in power and dignity should also surpass them in goodness and virtue. It is fitting that nobles and freeborn are more good and virtuous than other citizens. Hence, it is fitting that the king himself is better than the best and like a demigod.<sup>1</sup>

According to Giles, then, the king should be virtuous to a degree that sets him apart from the rest of society. The philosopher he invoked to support this claim was of course Aristotle, whose *Nicomachean Ethics* in fact provided a sketch of the moral perfection that Giles and other medieval politologists considered a fitting royal attribute: the “superhuman virtue, or goodness on a divine or heroic scale”.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Egidius Romanus, *De regimine principum libri III* (Rome, 1556), III.II.XXXII: “Potest ergo sic definiri regnum, quod est multitudo magna in qua sunt multi nobiles & ingenui, viventes secundum virtutem, ordinate sub uno viro optimo, ut sub rege [...] Sed si quilibet civis debet virtuose se habere; quia secundum Philosophum, in *Politiciis*, secundum quod aliquis excedit alios in potentia & dignitate, sic debet eos exceere in bonitate & virtute: decet nobiles & ingenuos esse magis bonos & virtuosos quam cives alios: propter quod regem ipsum tanquam excellentiorem decet esse optimum, & quasi semideum.”

2 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. by H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass., 1982 [orig. London 1934]), 375.

Aristotle bequeathed the parts for a concept of heroic virtue and gave it authority. But it was his medieval readers who explored the political potential of this concept and made it part of a royal identikit that remained intact until the modern era.<sup>3</sup> This chapter explores the monarchist reception of heroic virtue through two medieval authors of indubitable influence: Peter of Auvergne (d. 1304), who wrote the standard scholastic commentary to Aristotle's *Politics*, and Giles of Rome, who popularized some of its content through the genre of the princely mirror.

### Aristotle—The Politics of Superlative Virtue

Towards the end of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle announced that he would conclude his investigation of human nature with a survey of different types of political regimes. This extension of his ethical inquiry appears in *Politics*. With the coherence between these two texts in mind, it is not surprising that there is a broad conceptual overlap between Aristotle's ethical and political texts. The nature, aims and achievements of public life as described in *Politics* are in fact difficult to understand without reference to the *Ethics* and its understanding of virtue. Aristotle ranked the community of the *polis* higher than family life precisely because he considered it more virtuous, and the very end of the *polis* is a good life, understood as one of virtue.

Aristotle's notion that virtue might be held at an 'heroic' level is made explicit only in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. His account of this supereminent moral state is brief and sketchy, perhaps because it was of little practical relevance. In *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, Aristotle suggests that there are three different moral states to avoid: unrestraint, vice and bestiality. These have their desirable counterparts in self-restraint, virtue and a "superhuman virtue, or goodness on a divine or heroic scale". Bestiality and heroic virtue appear as the extreme ends of a moral spectrum, so far removed from virtues and vices that

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3 This chapter is not the first to study the medieval receptions of Aristotle's concept of heroic virtue, but is novel in its focus on politics. The fundamental study on heroic virtue—Rudolf Hofmann, *Die heroische Tugend: Geschichte und Inhalt eines theologischen Begriffes*. Münchener Studien zur historischen Theologie, Heft 12 (München: Verlag Josef Kösel & Friedrich Puster, 1933)—surveyed the adoption of the concept by theological discourse. Risto Saarinen has—for instance in "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage der individualistischen Ethik im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (eds.), (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 450–463—broadened the focus of this conceptual history beyond the theological mainstream to include philosophical issues, though with less attention to its political-theoretical ramifications.

Aristotle seems to suggest that they are to be different in kind. Bestial characters, found for instance among savages or the intellectually disabled, cannot be judged on the scales of vice. And similarly, the goodness of the gods is something quite beyond ordinary virtue. Aristotle does not clarify if the extraordinary moral perfection of divine or heroic virtue is also attainable for mortals, but adopts words of speech and Homeric examples that suggests that this might be the case. "Surpassing virtue changes men into gods," he quotes, and Hector, he reminds us, was so valorous that Priam exclaimed that he appeared to belong among the gods.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Ethics*, then, Aristotle does not dwell on the potential practical, social or political consequences that would result from the appearance of an individual of such superhuman virtue. But in the third book of the *Politics*, where he attends to the issue of justice in relation to different types of constitutions (in particular, in relation to monarchy), the political implications of extraordinary virtue are in fact central concerns.

Aristotle's constitutional theory involves his theory of justice, found in *Nicomachean Ethics* v. Equals, he states, are entitled to an equal share in government. But what is the standard by which an individual can be said to be equally or unequally entitled to this share? Equality or inequality of what? Wealth constitutes the foundation of political prerogatives in some polities, while ancestry matters more in others. According to Aristotle, the particular standard favoured in a certain state is in fact a distinguishing mark of its constitution. In Aristotle's idea of aristocracy or rule of the best, political prerogatives are based on virtue (coupled with a dash of property and freedom). But what happens, he ponders in consequence of this definition, if there in the midst of all these virtuous men, there would appear a man of such superlative excellence that he outshone all others? What should his status be compared to the other citizens? How should he relate to the laws? Repeatedly throughout these parts of Book III, Aristotle returns to the same conclusion: this man is not just another citizen. He is above the law. According to the equality principle of justice, the supereminent man should be the ruler. He is not an equal to the other members of the state, but like "a god among men".<sup>5</sup>

It has been remarked that Aristotle's notion of individuals of extreme virtue forms an important part of his understanding of absolute monarchy.<sup>6</sup> Kingship appears in five different forms according to Aristotle. Four of them

4 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 375–77.

5 Aristotle, *Politics*, transl. by Benjamin Jowett (New York: Dover, 2000 [orig. Oxford 1905]), 129.

6 William R. Newell, "Superlative Virtue: The Problem of Monarchy in Aristotle's 'Politics,'" *The Western Political Quarterly* 40:1 (1987), 159–178.

are based on law, which regulates the regime of the king, while the fifth is an absolute monarchy that knows no such restraint. Aristotle generally favours a rule according to legal constitution. And his definition of justice demands that in a society of equals, it is unnatural that one should permanently rule over others. Nevertheless, he feels that the appearance of extraordinary individuals overrules such common norms, and calls for an absolute monarchy to be established:

But when a whole family or some individual, happens to be so pre-eminent in virtue as to surpass all others, then it is just that they should be the royal family and supreme over all, or that this one citizen should be king of the whole nation [...] the only alternative is that he should have the supreme power, and that mankind should obey him, not in turn, but always.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle does not apply the term 'heroic' to characterize the pre-eminent virtue of these royals in *Politics*, and it is not clear if he thought that they exemplified the "superhuman virtue, or goodness on a divine or heroic scale", which he had sketched in *Ethics*. But a 'heroic' type of kingship does in fact appear in his account of the five different types of royal regimes. It is an historical type of rule, which he placed in the "heroic times", an era when some men became kings in recognition of their extraordinary services to the people.<sup>8</sup> But he makes no reference to the heroic virtue of the *Ethics* to explain the feats of these ancient rulers. And, anyhow, this historical type of kingship does not correspond to the type of rule that he foresaw for the super-virtuous man. The historical heroic kingship that Aristotle sketched represents instead a constitutional type of regime and not the absolute rule he deemed fit for the super-excellent individual.

In sum, Aristotle's *Politics* explored the idea that superlative virtue should come with supreme political prerogatives. But he made no explicit attempts to link this idea either to his musings on an historical type of kingship founded by heroes or to the brief comments he makes in the *Ethics* on virtue on a divine or heroic scale.

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<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 143.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 134.

### Peter of Auvergne—Heroic Virtue and the Historical Foundation of Kingship

With the completion of Wilhelm of Moerbeke's Latin translation of Aristotle's *Politics* (c.1260), European readers accessed lucid accounts of the benefits and drawbacks of different types of regimes. From then on, educated men were familiar with Aristotle's classification of government according to the number of participants in office, and recognized rule exercised by one (monarchy), by a few (aristocracy) or by a constitutional multitude (polity) as theoretically respectable alternatives. But kingship had a particular lure for medieval readers. It was of practical relevance for all who were subjects of royal or princely regimes. And Christian tradition seemed to favour kingship. The universe had one ruler in God, and, by analogy, it made sense that monarchs governed worldly communities. Added to this was the fact that biblical history celebrated kingship. Medieval readers, in short, had a great interest in understanding and legitimizing monarchy. The recovery of Aristotle proved useful in all fields of intellectual inquiry and it is no surprise that medieval scholars and pen pushers also ransacked his texts in their attempts to explore the theoretical ramifications of kingship.

The medieval Aristotle was an Aristotle in Latin translation; few would read the original Greek. But aiming to be faithful to Aristotle's original, Wilhelm of Moerbeke translated *Politics* word by word. He retained the Greek word order and Greek terminology where no Latin equivalents were at hand. The result was a text that added linguistic obscurity to the inevitable conceptual challenges involved in reading Aristotle. Medieval teachers promptly set out to clarify the difficulties of the text. Albert the Great provided helpful comments in the 1260s. Thomas Aquinas had commented on the work up to the middle of Book III by 1270. In the following two decades, his student, Peter of Auvergne, completed the remainder.

The commentators glossed Aristotle's text to clarify difficult passages and explain the content for less advanced readers.<sup>9</sup> But quite inevitably, a gloss that simply aimed to elucidate the original meaning of the text sometimes added new meanings or stressed aspects that were never central to Aristotle's argument. In *Politics*, Aristotle explored many different types of regimes. But Peter's commentary takes a particular interest in the absolute form of monarchy and its moral foundation in the prince. Where Aristotle in *Politics* describes kingship as one of the three true forms of government, Peter comments that it is

9 Martin Grabmann, *Die mittelalterlichen Kommentare zur Politik des Aristoteles* (München: Bayerischen Akademie, 1941).

the best of them,<sup>10</sup> and it has been noted that Peter's text consistently promotes monarchy and stretches its prerogatives beyond what can be inferred from Aristotle's discussion.<sup>11</sup>

How did Peter of Auvergne react to Aristotle's notion in the *Politics* that a man of superlative virtue ought to rule? The answer is that he read it in the light of the totality of both *Politics* and *Ethics*, and hence understood this supereminent ruler to be synonymous with the man of heroic virtue described in the *Ethics*, and—in accordance with this terminology of the heroic—to correspond to Aristotle's idea about the kings of a long gone heroic era. The concept of heroic virtue appears in Peter's *Politics* commentary at the point where Aristotle explains that justice would not be done to the individual of superior virtue, should he be treated as any other citizen, and that such a man may truly be deemed a god among men. Peter seems particularly intent on explaining what is meant by Aristotle's reference to the divine. His comment clearly implies knowledge of *Nicomachean Ethics* VII and the man of "superhuman virtue, or goodness on a divine or heroic scale", though he does not explicitly mention this parallel.

[a man] who surpasses all others in virtue, would truly seem like God. By this it is meant that perfection in virtue and deeds can be attained in two ways. One is according to the degree common to men. The other is in a manner or degree above that which is common to men, which may be done by heroic virtue. For it is by the heroic virtue that someone, through moral or intellectual virtues, may achieve a performance [*attin-git ad operationem*] of a virtue beyond the manner common to men. This is something divine and it happens through something divine in man, that is the intellect. This is what is said here by the philosopher, that such a man who surpasses all others is said to be like God.<sup>12</sup>

10 Petrus de Alvernia, *Continuatio S. Thomae in Politicam* (Taurini, 1952), lib. 3 l. 13 n. 1: "inter politias rectas regnum est optima et rectissima politiarum; et ideo regula et mensura aliarum: optimum enim perfectissimum est in unoquoque genere, et mensura est omnium aliorum".

11 Thomas Renna, "Aristotle and the French Monarchy, 1260–1303," *Viator* 9 (1978), 309–24.

12 Petrus, *Continuatio*, lib. 3 l. 12 n. 4: "[...] unum excedentem omnes alios in virtute, verisimile est esse quasi Deum. Circa quod intelligendum est, quod aliquis potest attingere ad virtutem perfectam et actum ipsius dupliciter: uno modo secundum statum communem humanum: alio modo ultra communem modum vel statum humanum: hoc autem fit per virtutem heroicam. Est autem virtus heroica secundum quam aliquis per virtutem moralem et intellectualem attingit ad operationem cuiuslibet virtutis supra communem modum hominum: hoc autem est aliquod esse divinum, quod fit per aliquod divinum in

Peter adds that the type of eminence discussed by Aristotle in the *Politics* is synonymous with the heroic virtue mentioned in *Ethics* VII. But a closer scrutiny reveals that Peter's account of the heroic virtue in fact elaborates on Aristotle's brief. Aristotle did refer to the extreme state of goodness as both heroic and divine. But Peter clarifies this and explains how heroic virtue somehow relates to that which is divine in man, that is, his intellect. This point is not made in *Ethics* VII, and neither is it entirely of Peter's own making. It derives from another commentary on Aristotle, in this case Thomas Aquinas's words on *Ethics* VII. Given the biographical and institutional ties that link Peter to Aquinas, this influence on his commentary comes as no surprise.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, Aristotle referred to the state of extraordinary virtue as being "heroic" or "divine". Thomas offered two different explanations for this choice of terminology. He suggested that Aristotle could be understood historically. The gentiles called the spirits of particularly noteworthy people *heroes* and considered them deified. But on the other hand, the reference to divinity could also be understood in the context of the scholastic notion that the human soul was positioned between lesser things and the divine. The soul communicates with the divine through the intellect. Sometimes, Thomas suggested, this reasonable part of the soul is perfect to the extent that it appears to be of a wholly different substance. This is called a divine virtue and it is above ordinary human virtue. Accordingly, Thomas concluded, Aristotle did not talk about men who were actually divine, but about men who excelled in virtue to an extent so rare that they seemed to possess (*patet*) a force or a virtue that was divine.<sup>13</sup>

When Peter of Auvergne glossed Book III of the *Politics*, he must have recalled Aquinas's reading of the *Ethics* and felt that Aristotle's discussion about supereminent individuals somehow bore out the concept of heroic virtue. And in line with this terminology, it made sense to consider Aristotle's notes on the kingship of the heroic age as an historical example of his abstract notion that the super-virtuous ought to rule. There is not much to support the idea that Aristotle actually intended this parallel, but for Peter the kingship of the heroic age was a regime based on *virtus heroica*. The kings were heroes and Peter's gloss describes them in a manner that conforms to the concept. They

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homine existens, quod est intellectus: sic loquitur hic philosophus; talem enim hominem, et sic excedentem omnes alios, dicit esse sicut Deum."

- 13 Thomas Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum* (Rome, 1969), lib. 7 l. 1 n. 7–10. For Aquinas on heroic virtue, see Iacopo Costa, "Heroic virtue in the commentary tradition on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the second half of the thirteenth century," in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages*, István Bejczy (ed.), (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 151–172.



were, Peter suggests, men who had achieved perfection in virtue and deed to a degree that surpassed the common measure of man. Peter describes various ways in which they came to be recognized as kings. They may have benefited their people by making war on their enemies or by useful inventions. Saturn—who taught his people how to cultivate wheat—appears in Peter's account as an example of a royal benefactor who was considered a god.<sup>14</sup>

Peter's commentary on the *Politics* explored the capacity of the text to legitimize powerful kingship, emphasizing that this type of regime was fitting in cases where a ruler of unsurpassed virtue was at hand. He applied commonplace analogies from medicine (the king is the heart) and theology (the universe is governed by one absolute ruler) to make the case for monarchy.<sup>15</sup> But it is his fascination with the *optimus vir* and association of this supereminent individual with kingship that gives particular flavour to his gloss. The concept of heroic virtue, which he adopted from ethical and theological speculation, was a useful tool to promote the political prerogatives of the king, by reference to his supposedly outstanding virtue.

### Giles of Rome—Heroic Virtue as the Virtue of Government

With the commentary of Peter of Auvergne, those who read or heard *Politics* at the arts faculties of the medieval universities encountered heroic virtue not simply as a part of Aristotle's account of different moral states; with Peter's reading it was also a political concept charged with associations to monarchy. As such, heroic virtue was popularized by Giles of Rome, author of one of the most widely distributed political tracts of the Middle Ages, the *Regimine*

14 Petrus, *Continuatio*, lib. 3 l. 13 n. 9: "In prima dicit quod quarta species monarchiae regalis, est secundum quod aliqui principantur aliquibus secundum virtutem heroicam. Et principantes dicebantur heroes, idest attingentes ad virtutem perfectam et actum eius ultra communem statum hominum; et fuit ista temporibus eiusmodi heroum. Isti autem voluntarie principabantur secundum legem. Primi autem principantes isto principatu assumpti fuerunt ad istum principatum, propter beneficium quod contulerant multitudini, aut quia invenerunt artem aliquam utilem regioni, sicut Saturnus in Italia primus docuit artem seminandi triticum, propter quod reputatus fuit Deus apud ipsos; aut quia primo praeliati fuerunt contra inimicos multitudinis; aut quia primo congregaverunt homines regionis inducentes eos ad vitam civilem; aut quia emerunt regionem: et ideo facti fuerunt reges propter huiusmodi beneficia, et hoc volentibus subditis voluntarie eos assuescentibus, principantes secundum successionem generis: et erant quasi principantes patrie, idest principantes secundum leges descendentes a parentibus in ipsos."

15 Petrus, *Continuatio*, lib. 3.12.14.



*principum*. Written in the 1280s for the young Philip the Fair, this princely mirror reached an audience well beyond the courts. It was translated into most of the European vernaculars and must be rated as one of the most influential political works of all time. It promoted far-reaching claims of royal prerogatives through an easy blend of Aristotelian moral philosophy, theology and law.<sup>16</sup>

Giles instructed the king not only in matters of the government of the realm (politics) or his household (economy) but also to rule himself (ethics). A large part of *Regimine principum* is in fact a primer in virtue ethics applied to the person of the prince. Following Aristotle's lead, Giles accounts not only for the virtues but also for lesser qualities of the soul that were nevertheless desirable, such as self-restraint or perseverance. And above the regular virtues, heroic virtue has its pride of place in Giles's account, as a moral attribute particularly fitting for the ruler:

There are also other dispositions for goodness that are above the virtues, of this type is the divine virtue or a virtue that is heroic and more than just, which is discussed in Ethics VII. Just as some men are like beasts and bad beyond the measure of men, there are some who are as if divine, and they are good above the ordinary measure, so that they because of this may be called super-virtuous. This divine virtue, which is somehow above virtue, should in particular be the possession of kings and princes, who (as it is said) should be demigods.<sup>17</sup>

Following this account, Giles provides lengthy discussions of the individual virtues and their particular relevance for the prince and his government. What is, for instance, *iocunditas*, and in what contexts and in what manner should princes be *iocundi*? How does the concept of heroic virtue fit into this topography of princely virtues?

Giles explains that there are four degrees of goodness or badness. Some men are morally soft, more severe cases lack self-restraint, some men are worse off

16 Charles F. Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum: reading and writing politics at court and university*, c. 1275–c. 1525 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

17 Egidius, *De regimine*, I.II.III: "Sunt etiam quaedam bonae dispositiones, quae sunt supra virtutem, cuiusmodi est virtus divina, sive virtus heroica & superiusta, de qua determinatur VII Ethicorum. Nam sicut aliqui homines sunt sicut bestiae, & sunt mali ultra modum hominum: sic aliqui sunt quasi divini, & sunt boni supra modum, propter quod tales supervirtuosi dici possunt. Huiusmodi autem virtutem, divinam, quae est quodammodo super virtus, maxime habere debent reges & principes, qui (ut dictum est) semidii esse debent."

than that and intemperate, and the very worst are outright bestial. Giles is referring to *Ethics* VII, so the opposite of being bestial is of course to possess heroic virtue. But Giles's account of this concept is more than a simple repetition of Aristotle's brief:

In the fourth and highest degree of goodness are divine men. Just as some people are bestial and bad beyond the measure of man, so some are like divine and they are good beyond the measure of man. This is why the Philosopher in the beginning of *Ethics* VII relates what Homer told of Hector, that King Priam, his father, said about him that he was exceedingly good, so that he did not seem to be a child of mortal men but of gods. For that virtue by which someone should be good beyond the measure of man the Philosopher calls heroic, that is ruling and governing (*principans & dominativa*). And from this it is clear that if kings and princes wish to rule rightly it is not enough that they avoid every degree of that which is bad, that they are not soft, not lack restraint, not are intemperate or bestial, but they ought to be in the highest degree of goodness. For they who wish to rule and govern others must have that virtue which rules and governs others and be good in a measure beyond that of others and be like divine men.<sup>18</sup>

Giles makes no reference to Peter of Auvergne. But his account of the heroic virtue appears like a logical conclusion to the monarchist reading of Peter. In the quote above, which introduces this chapter, Giles states that it is fitting that the king exceeds his subjects in virtue, and here he declares that this highest state of goodness is identical with the heroic virtue of *Ethics* VII. But Giles goes further than this and emphasizes the specifically political aspects of the

18 Egidius, *De regimine*, I.II.XXXII: "In quartu & et in supremo gradu bonorum, sunt homines divini. Nam sicut aliqui homines sunt bestiales, & sunt mali ultra modum hominum: sic aliqui sunt quasi divini, & sunt boni ultra modum humanum. Unde et Philosophus circa principium VII Ethicorum dicit, quod Homerus refert de Hectore, quod Rex Priamus pater suus dicebat de ipso, quod erat valde bonus: propter quod non videbatur existere puer viri moralis, sed dei. Virtus autem illa, per quam quis debet esse bonus ultra modum humanum, appellatur a Philosopho heroica idest principans, & dominativa. Ex hoc ergo manifeste patet, quod reges & principes si debent recte dominari, non sufficit eos fugere omnes gradus malorum, & quod non sint nec molles, nec incontinentes, nec intemperate, nec bestiales, sed oportet eos esse in summo gradu bonorum: qui enim aliis dominari & principari desiderant, oportet quod habeant virtute illam, quae est dominans & principans respectu aliarum & sint boni ultra modum aliorum, & et sint quasi homines divini. In hoc ergo gradu debent esse reges & principes."

concept. He explains that 'heroic' in Aristotle's vocabulary refers to the act of ruling (it is *principans* and *dominativa*). In the account of Giles of Rome, heroic virtue is the emblematic virtue of government and a fitting, or even necessary, attribute of the ruler.

Among the rich practical-philosophical legacy of Aristotle, three distinct ideas were involved in making the concept of heroic virtue an ideal of princely rule. In *Politics*, Aristotle had argued that an individual of superhuman excellence ought to be made king. He had also identified five types of kingship and called one of them heroic, from the name of the heroic age when it flourished. But the concept of heroic virtue came from the *Ethics*, where Aristotle had mentioned the possibility that some men reached a state of virtue that was above what was common among men. The three ideas were not explicitly combined in Aristotle's texts and it is uncertain if he thought that they ought to or could be. Peter of Auvergne and Giles of Rome, two of Aristotle's most influential medieval readers, worked in an intellectual context where these texts were studied intensely and compared. This made them likely to treat the Aristotelian corpus as a whole, looking for correspondences between and within the texts, as they did when they discussed extreme states of virtue. And while Aristotle had been in a position to compare different types of constitutions, Peter and Giles and most of their fellow medieval readers lived in a world where monarchy was the norm and hence had a particular interest in exploring its philosophical foundations. With this intellectual and social context in mind, they interpreted and popularized what they considered to be important views of the philosopher for generations of medieval and Early Modern readers. This made them crucial agents in a process of reception that made heroic virtue a political ideal, an image of princely virtue that set the king apart from his subjects and made him almost a god.

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*Kingly and Aristocratic Representations of Heroic  
Virtue in Early Modern Savoy and Rome*





# The Gem and the Mirror of Heroic Virtue: Emanuele Tesauro and the Heroic at the Court of Savoy

Kristine Kolrud

Heroic virtue was a central concept in early modern court culture, and in this chapter I will examine and compare some examples of visualizations of heroic virtue associated with members of the House of Savoy in the middle years of the seventeenth century. The duchy of Savoy consisted mainly of the principality of Piedmont, the duchy of Savoie, and the county of Nice.<sup>1</sup> It was a minor European power but strategically located as gatekeeper of the Alps. Its rulers strived for recognition as monarchs, rather than dukes, an ambition that was finally fulfilled in 1713 when Vittorio Amedeo II became king of Sicily.<sup>2</sup>

Relations within the House of Savoy were strained in the mid-seventeenth century. In 1639, following the death of the young duke, Francesco Giacinto, civil war broke out. The regency of Duchess Marie Christine for her younger son Carlo Emanuele II was contested by her brothers-in-law, Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia and Tommaso di Savoia. Even after the peace settlement in 1642, relations between the duchess and Prince Tommaso in particular remained problematic.

The concept of heroic virtue is treated extensively by the humanist Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675), who was associated with the court of Savoy. Tesauro, whose fame was European-wide, enjoyed considerable influence as a court intellectual, and he was also responsible for numerous iconographical

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1 The Savoyard territories also consisted of the duchy of Aosta and the principality of Oneglia. For a description of the different parts of the duchy, see Geoffrey Symcox, *Victor Amedeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State, 1675–1730*, Men in Office (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 18–53.

2 For the negotiations for the Peace of Utrecht, which led to the elevation of Vittorio Amedeo II to the throne as well as his subsequent exchange of the throne of Sicily for that of Sardinia in 1720, see Symcox, *Victor Amedeus II*, 157–84. For Savoy's royal ambitions, see Robert Oresko, "The House of Savoy in Search for a Royal Crown in the Seventeenth Century," in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, Robert Oresko, G.C. Gibbs, and H.M. Scott (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 272–350 and Luigi La Rocca, "L'aspirazione del duca Carlo Emanuele I al titolo di re di Piemonte," *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. 5, 46 (1910): 375–92.

programmes. He is particularly well known for his work on metaphors.<sup>3</sup> This chapter examines Tesauro's descriptions of heroic virtue in his panegyrics to the duchess and her brothers-in-law, and focuses in particular on how the concept is expressed visually. It also considers the representation of heroic virtue in a court ballet and an engraving; Tesauro probably contributed ideas to the former, but it is unclear if he was involved in the iconography of the engraving.

### Duchess Marie Christine's Diamond

In two of the three panegyrics treated here, Tesauro describes specific and tangible symbols of heroic virtue. Tesauro published his *Panegirici*, dedicated to Duchess Marie Christine, in 1659.<sup>4</sup> In his dedicatory preface, Tesauro had already connected Marie Christine's heroic virtues (in plural) with her device.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter he devotes the academic panegyric "Il Diamante" ("The Diamond")

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- 3 Tesauro was ordained as Jesuit priest in 1627 at the insistence of Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia but left the order in 1634 and continued as secular priest. Subsequently, he entered the service of Prince Tommaso di Savoia-Carignano. Tesauro was preceptor to the sons of Prince Tommaso and to Duke Carlo Emanuele II's son, Vittorio Amedeo II, and he remained at the court of Savoy until his death. Maria Luisa Doglio includes a bibliography of studies on Tesauro as well as his own works in Emanuele Tesauro, *Scritti*, Maria Luisa Doglio (ed.), *Contributi e proposte* 36 (Alessandria: Dell'Orso, 2004), 181–85.
  - 4 Emanuele Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 3 vols. (Torino: Bartolomeo Zavatta, 1659–60). Tesauro also first published his *Panegirici sacri* in 1633 with a dedication to the duchess. Emanuele Tesauro, *Panegirici sacri* (Torino: eredi Gio. Domenico Tarino, 1633). The three volumes of the *Panegirici* (the first two published in 1659) also contain his earlier panegyrics (including those published in 1633). The third volume, *Panegirici et ragionamenti*, has the date 1660 on the frontispiece as well as a dedication to the duchess but includes the panegyric delivered in 1664 after Marie Christine's death in late 1663.
  - 5 Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 1: unpaginated. In the *Panegirici* Tesauro uses both *divisa* and *impresa*. English writers often did not distinguish between device and emblem. Michael Bath, "Emblem Books," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, David Scott Kastan (ed.), vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 276. Tesauro already makes clear that *impresa* is the common term for *Argutie Heroiche* (which may be translated as heroic wit) in the title of his best-known work: *Il cannocchiale aristotelico: O sia idea delle argutezze heroiche vulgarmente chiamate imprese* [...] (Torino: Gio. Sinibaldo, 1654). Tesauro, moreover, distinguishes between *impresa* and *emblema*. For instance, he points out that only the *impresa* appears on escutcheons and that it represents a "specific and heroic concept" ("un Concetto particolare & heroico"). Tesauro. *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, 777. The best work on Marie Christine still is Gaudenzio Claretta, *Storia della reggenza di Cristina di Francia, duchessa di Savoia: Con annetazioni e documenti inediti*, 3 vols. (Torino: Civelli, 1868–69).



to an explanation of Marie Christine's device, a diamond with the accompanying text in French: "plus de fermeté que d'éclat" and sometimes in Italian "più di sodezza che di splendore;" which one may translate as "greater solidity than brilliance." Tesauro also uses this device as focal point of his frontispiece (fig. 1). The author hardly sets himself a challenging task when he explains how the diamond symbolizes heroic virtue, considering its placement at the top of the hierarchy of gems, its extreme solidity, and its traditional use as a symbol of the forceful hero.<sup>6</sup> It also provides him with substantial material for the heroic virtue of the duchess. According to Tesauro, the diamond is the king of all gems, just like the duchess is the diamond of all queens.<sup>7</sup> He refers to ancient sources, such as Ovid and the term "Beltà Heroica" ("heroic beauty").<sup>8</sup> The author delineates a genealogy and refers to how both her father, Henry IV of France, and Cosimo I de' Medici on her mother's side made use of the diamond.<sup>9</sup> Not all diamonds are of the same quality, however, and Tesauro makes clear that in this case, it is absolutely superior and has Cypriot origins; therefore it is particularly well suited to the queen of Cyprus.<sup>10</sup> As already mentioned, the duke of Savoy aimed for recognition as king and laid claims to the kingdom of Cyprus, which is why Tesauro constantly refers to the duchess as queen.<sup>11</sup> Although others also employ the diamond as their device, Tesauro says, Marie Christine is the only queen to do so.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, he argues that women who are in the possession of heroic virtue are raised above Salic law and fit to rule.<sup>13</sup> The panegyric thus draws on the particular tradition of considering some women to be above their sex and consequently on a par with men. This is the privilege of those of high birth, and Tesauro's emphasis on the

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6 Emanuele Tesauro, "Il Diamante: Panegirico academico," in Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 1: 93.

7 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 5.

8 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 93.

9 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 16–17. Cosimo I de' Medici was the grandfather of Marie Christine's mother, Marie de Médicis. The Medici had a tradition for the emblematic use of the diamond, or, specifically, of the diamond ring, that went back to Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici (Cosimo il Vecchio) (1381–1464) who was the first to use the diamond in this manner. See Diana Scarisbrick, "Forever Adamant: A Renaissance Diamond Ring," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 40 (1982), 62.

10 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 5, 11, 12.

11 See Oresko, "House of Savoy," for an explanation of the strategy and for the claim to be treated as a royal house.

12 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 6.

13 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 15.



FIGURE 1 *Nicolas Auroux, frontispiece of Emanuele Tesauro, Panegirici, Turin, 1659. Turin, Biblioteca Reale di Torino.*

example of Marie Christine's forefathers is in line with this understanding.<sup>14</sup> "Il Diamante" is undated in the collection of panegyrics, but Tesauro refers to his effort to have it printed in a letter to the duchess of 1658, and it seems reasonable to assume that it was composed that year or earlier.<sup>15</sup> The emphasis on Marie Christine's natural ability to rule could also possibly be viewed in the context of her prolonged regency, which formally should have ended in 1648.<sup>16</sup> Explicit reference to Marie Christine's heroic virtue is made before the publication of Tesauro's panegyric, however, and the diamond had been lauded as invincible since antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Pietro Marcellino Orafi praises the warrior heroine and speaks of her solidity (*soddezza*), which supersedes that of Hercules.<sup>18</sup> Orafi's panegyric may well be read as a description of heroic virtue, but despite the "attioni eroiche, e Virtù imparreggiabili" ("heroic actions and incommensurable virtues") of the subtitle, this is rarely spelt out in the text (though

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- 14 See Torquato Tasso, *Discorso della virtù femminile e donnesca*, Maria Luisa Doglio (ed.). Il divano 120 (Palermo: Selerio editore, 1997 [1582]), 62. Tasso praises the virtues of Eleanor of Austria, the dedicatee of his discourse on female virtue and a woman of "imperial and heroic blood" ("sangue imperiale ed eroico"), as equal to the male virtues of all of her predecessors. See also Maria Luisa Doglio's introduction, "Il Tasso e le donne," 7–39. For a discussion of various approaches to the question of women and power, see Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
  - 15 See Andreina Griseri, *Il Diamante: La Villa di Madama Reale Cristina di Francia* ([Torino]: Istituto bancario di San Paolo di Torino, 1988), 41–42.
  - 16 For Carlo Emanuele II's majority, see Claretta, *Storia della reggenza*, 2: 252; Ercole Ricotti, *Storia della monarchia piemontese*, Vol. 6 (Firenze: G. Barbèra, 1869), 62–64. Tesauro also hoped to retain special favours from the duchess and clearly needed to improve his relationship with Marie Christine after the death of her two brothers-in-law. See Griseri, *Il Diamante: La Villa*, 42 and 50, n. 4.
  - 17 For a reference to Marie Christine's heroic virtue, see Chevalier de Sévigné's letter to the duchess, dated 22 November 1652. René Renaud de Sévigné, *Correspondance du Chevalier de Sévigné et de Christine de France Duchesse de Savoie* [...], Jean Lemoine and Frédéric Saulnier (eds.), Société de l'Histoire de France 355 (Paris: H. Laurens, 1911), 211. For the diamond's superior qualities see Tesauro, "Il Diamante" and Filippo Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico, o sia, Università d'imprese scelte* [...] (Milano: Per lo stampatore archiepiscopale, 1653), 363–64.
  - 18 Pietro Marcellino Orafi, *Il tempio della gloria, eretto alle attioni Eroiche, e Virtù imparreggiabili di Madama Reale di Savoia* [...] (Genova: Benedetto Guasco, 1655), 65. The panegyric is dedicated to the Marquis of Pianezza, one of Marie Christine's most important advisers. It was published at the time of the campaign against the Waldensian heretics, which was led by Pianezza.

one may ask if it is needed).<sup>19</sup> Pietro Giovanni Capriata's portrayal of Marie Christine's involvement in the civil war is more sober, as might be expected from the genre, but he emphasizes her *virile* greatness.<sup>20</sup> It should be noted, moreover, that much earlier references to women's heroic virtue exist.<sup>21</sup> Marie Christine used the emblem prior to her widowhood; the emphasis on greatness is evident from the beginning, but it acquires a different meaning when she is forced to insist on her invincibility.<sup>22</sup> What remains unclear is exactly when the diamond came to be explicitly, rather than implicitly, associated with her heroic virtue. Tesauro refers to earlier uses of the diamond as device but claims that it was taken as a symbol of solidity only. This, he asserts, is indeed a heroic virtue but only one, and the combination of the two almost incompatible qualities of "*Eccezziva Fortezza*" ("excessive force") and "*Eccezziva Modestia*" ("excessive modesty") is what singles out the diamond from other gems; Marie Christine's heroic virtues (in plural) could not be symbolized by anything but the diamond. The author appears to suggest that the interpretation of the diamond as a symbol of heroic virtue was not new and that it was a conscious yet entirely unpretentious choice by the duchess.<sup>23</sup>

The symbolic use of the diamond was not unique to Marie Christine, as also pointed out by Tesauro, although he places great emphasis on the outstanding qualities of her particular diamond, nor was it uncommon for princes and princesses to adorn themselves with diamonds.<sup>24</sup> When used as a device, however, one may assume that the diamond could even function as a reference to heroic qualities in other contexts.

19 At one point he explicitly emphasizes the superhuman qualities of the regent's virtues, elsewhere he refers to her "eroica, & eccellentissima virtù" ("heroic and most excellent virtue"), but this appears in the context of her extraordinary generosity. Orafi, *Il tempio*, 31 and 55.

20 Pietro Giovanni Capriata, *Dell'istoria di Pietro Giovanni Capriata: Parte seconda... dall'Anno MDCXXXIII fino al MDCXLIII*, Vol. 2 (Genova: Gio: Maria Farroni, 1649), for instance 415.

21 Tasso claims that the heroic is not the prerogative of men and that many women are born with heroic virtue. *Discorso*, 63. For an even earlier example, see John Considine, *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe: Lexicography and the Making of Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 6.

22 In a eulogizing dedication to the duchess, Luigi Giuglaris refers to how her diamond was exposed to trials (a clear reference to the civil war) and proved to be in possession of greater solidity than brilliance. *La scuola della verità aperta a' prencipi...* (Torino: Ferrofino, 1650), unpaginated dedication to the duchess.

23 Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 5–6 and 96.

24 See Scarisbrick, "Forever Adamant."



Many diamonds are mentioned in the inventory taken after Marie Christine's death on 26 December 1663, and it seems that several of them can be matched with her appearance in numerous portraits. One of them is a cross consisting of six large diamonds with several smaller ones and three pear-shaped pearls attached to it.<sup>25</sup> Marie Christine is often depicted wearing this cross after the death of Duke Vittorio Amedeo I, her husband, and sometimes she is shown with another diamond cross without pearls, which is also mentioned in the inventory (figs. 2 and 3).<sup>26</sup> Before Vittorio Amedeo's death in 1637 (and occasionally after this date), she often used another large diamond with pearls in her portraits. One of the pearls was the so-called *Perla pelegrina* (pilgrim pearl), and the ensemble was originally a gift from Philip II of Spain to his daughter Caterina (Catalina Micaela), Marie Christine's mother-in-law.<sup>27</sup> Marie Christine is shown with this jewel on the obverse of a medal by Guillaume Dupré from 1635 (fig. 4). Her use of large diamonds in portraits was frequent even before her widowhood. Even though it was common for princesses to be portrayed with diamonds, Marie Christine may well have attempted to conspicuously link device and representation. This is particularly noteworthy in her widowhood when she is wearing her black widow's garb (fig. 5), and the diamond is therefore easily associated with her power as regent. The cross could also be linked to faith and the widow's pious mourning, indeed an important means of legitimating her right to rule on behalf of her son. Marie Christine's widow's garb is typical of her day, and it may be noted that there are similarities between some of the portraits of the duchess and those of her sister-in-law, Anne of Austria. The regent for Louis XIV is sometimes shown with a diamond cross but more often with one of pearls.<sup>28</sup>

25 Archivio di Stato di Torino, Inventarj delle gioje, argenterie, e mobili di Mad.ma R.le Christina di Francia ritrovate dopo la morte della Med.ma, 23 and 26 January 1664, Gioie e mobili, 2, no. 11, unpaginated no. 2.

26 Inventarj delle gioje, no. 1. Oresko includes a reproduction of a painting (anonymous, private collection, Piedmont) with a slightly different variant. Oresko, "House of Savoy," 313.

27 Inventarj delle gioje, no. 34. The ensemble was in turn given to Marie Christine by Vittorio Amedeo I when they married. Claretta, *Storia della reggenza*, 1: 12–13. The largest pearl is described as *Perla pelegrina* in the inventory, but a *Peregrina* was in use at the Spanish court not only after the marriage of Caterina to Carlo Emanuele I but even after her death. For the use of the jewel in seventeenth-century Spain, see Priscilla E. Muller, *Jewels in Spain, 1500–1800* (New York: The Hispanic Society of America, 1972), 53–54. For diamonds in earlier inventories, see Griseri, *Il Diamante: La Villa*, 36, 38–39.

28 Anne of Austria wears a cross formed by pearls in the portrait by Charles and Henri Beaubrun, dated to c.1647 in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin. The collection of prints showing Anne of Austria in widow's garb at the Bibliothèque nationale de France suggests that



FIGURE 2 *Antonio De Pienne after Esprit Grandjean, Marie Christine of France, frontispiece of Samuel Guichenon, Histoire Généalogique de la Royale Maison de Savoie, Lyons, 1660. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Réserves des livres rares.*



FIGURE 3

*Philibert Torret, called Narciso or Narcis, Marie Christine of France with Adelaide, Margherita and Carlo Emanuele II, c. 1644, detail showing Duchess Marie Christine. Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale.*



FIGURE 4 *Guillaume Dupré, bronze medal with portrait of Duchess Marie Christine (obverse) and her device with the inscription "Plus de fermeté que d'éclat" (reverse), 1635, Turin, Palazzo Madama—Museo Civico d'Arte Antica di Torino.*





FIGURE 5 *Giovenale Boetto (?) after Giovanni Gaspare Baldoino, Allegory of the Reconciliation between Marie Christine of France and the Princes of Savoy, frontispiece for a thesis by Carlo Amedeo and Ottavio Valentino Provana di Druent, 1644, detail showing Duchess Marie Christine. Turin, Biblioteca Reale di Torino.*

### A Cylinder for Prince Maurizio

Tesauro's panegyric oration, delivered on the occasion of Prince Maurizio's funeral in 1657, was published in the same volume of his *Panegirici*.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on a woman's heroic virtues, and indeed the celebration of a

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mostly her dress was unadorned but also that she wore crosses of pearls more often than those of diamonds.

29 Emanuele Tesauro, "Il Cilindro: Oratione panegirica," in Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 1: 147–69.



somewhat unusual ruler, is paralleled in the tribute to the prince, who can hardly be characterized as a typical war hero. As part of the 1642 peace treaty between Marie Christine and her brothers-in-law, Prince Maurizio renounced the cardinalate and married Ludovica, the eldest daughter of the duchess. Maurizio was learned and an important patron of the arts, but Tesauro could hardly honour a former cardinal as a man of the church.<sup>30</sup> Both interest in art and heroic deeds in battle could be expected from secular princes. Nonetheless, Tesauro succeeds in emphasizing any possible tendencies towards courage in war, but here, too, he stresses the device as heroic and once more uses it as the title: “Il Cilindro” (“The Cylinder”). Maurizio’s device is a cone-shaped mirror with the inscription OMNIS IN UNUM (fig. 6).<sup>31</sup> Tesauro links this to Maurizio’s generosity and how his ancestors’ good qualities are merged in him.<sup>32</sup> Tesauro points out that *omnis in unum* (the whole in one) is a quotation from Vergil and, although Tesauro is not explicit on this point, refers to courage in war.<sup>33</sup> The symbol also unequivocally demonstrates how everything outside the mirror is deformed but is corrected in its centre and acquires perfection.<sup>34</sup> It is, in other words, the cone-shaped mirror, an optical instrument, that enables us

30 For Prince Maurizio and his importance as patron of the arts see Matthias Oberli, “Magnificentia Principis:” *Das Mäzentatentum des Prinzen und Kardinals Maurizio von Savoyen (1593–1657)* (Weimar: vdg Verlag, 1999). Maria Luisa Doglio points out that the panegyrics to the cardinal and his brother, Tommaso, are reconciliatory and aim to do away with all divergences between the two princes and the duchess. Doglio emphasizes the contrast between them and Tesauro’s publications on Tommaso’s heroism during the civil war, *Campeggiamenti, ovvero istorie del Piemonte*, first published between 1640 and 1643. Maria Luisa Doglio, “Letteratura e retorica da Tesauro a Gioffredo,” in *Storia di Torino*, vol. 4, *La città fra crisi e ripresa (1630–1730)*, Giuseppe Ricuperati (ed.), (Torino: Einaudi, 2002), 576–77 and 607.

31 It is also the device of Maurizio’s academy, the Accademia dei Solinghi, see for instance Tesauro’s explanation in *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, 755, and Giovanale Boetto’s etching, *Garden of the Accademia dei Solinghi*, made for a thesis by Paolo Pasta (dedicated to Prince Maurizio), c. 1654, Turin, Galleria Sabauda, inv. stampe 2432.

32 Tesauro, “Il Cilindro,” 154 and *passim*.

33 Tesauro, “Il Cilindro,” 152. He quotes the whole line “Haud [sic!] aliter Sociûm Virtus coit OMNIS IN UNUM”. This is a repetition from *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, 755. In *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* Tesauro mentions Vergil without specific reference to the *Aeneid*, but the quotation included (“*Virtus coit omnis in unum*”) is identifiable. The quotation is from the *Aeneid*, bk. 10, line 410. Joseph Davidson translates this as “just so the whole valour of thy troops in one combines”: Virgil, *The Works of Virgil, translated into English Prose, as near the original as the different idioms of the Latin and English languages will allow [...]* in two volumes, trans. Joseph Davidson, New edition, vol. 2 (London: Printed for Geo. B. Whittaker, 1826), 338.

34 Tesauro, “Il Cilindro,” 152.



FIGURE 6 Frontispiece of Emanuele Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, Turin, 1654. Turin, Biblioteca Civica Centrale di Torino.

to see our surroundings correctly. At the time a cylinder—at least in its Italian form *cilindro*—meant a small glass column with these particular properties.<sup>35</sup> According to Tesauro, the true and honest idea of heroic virtues was inscribed in Maurizio's soul.<sup>36</sup> The prince therefore embodies his symbol and both are conspicuously associated with heroic virtue. Here the mirror plays a central role, and it was a highly elastic symbol in the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> In the panegyric, Tesauro points to the tradition of the mirror of truth and refers to Aristotle's moral philosophy.<sup>38</sup> During his time in Rome, the then cardinal was the mirror, Tesauro claims, toward which those who were not in the habit of admiring anyone turned in admiration.<sup>39</sup> Thus the prince is described as an example to be emulated by others.

### Warrior Heroes

Prince Tommaso died a year before his elder brother, and Tesauro delivered the panegyric oration in 1656 at his funeral. It was published along with the other two panegyrics and simply titled "L'Heroe" ("The Hero").<sup>40</sup> In this panegyric, Tesauro does not make use of Tommaso's device but praises his efforts in battle. In other words, he employs a much less complicated understanding of heroic virtue. He refers to Aristotle's definition and refutes the claim that heroic virtue should be interpreted as a theoretical concept only. It is to be understood, he continues, as "an accumulation of all pacific, warrior, political, and individual virtues," the total of which exceeds excellence and approximates man to God.<sup>41</sup> Even though he focuses on the warrior hero in this panegyric, Tesauro emphasizes Tommaso's superior heroism by accentuating the prince's

35 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 488. Picinelli also mentions that it is suitable for an association of academics.

36 Tesauro, "Il Cilindro," 155.

37 See Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 404–7.

38 Tesauro, "Il Cilindro," 152. The references are included also in *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, 755, n. 381. See also Cesare Ripa's discussion of the mirror in his entry on Verità (Truth), *Iconologia*, (Venezia: Cristoforo Tomasini, 1645 [1593]), 666.

39 Tesauro, "Il Cilindro," 161.

40 Emanuele Tesauro, "L'Heroe: Oratione panegirica," in Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 1: 127–46. For an updated study on Prince Tommaso Francesco di Savoia Carignano (in contemporary sources often Tomaso) see Leila Picco, *Il Patrimonio privato dei Savoia: Tommaso di Savoia Carignano, 1596–1656*, Collana di storia economica subalpina (Torino: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 2004).

41 "un cumulo di tutte le Virtù Pacifiche & Guerriere, Politiche & Solitarie," Tesauro, "L'Heroe," 131. He refers to Book Seven of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. His definition in

exceptional combination of religious and military virtues.<sup>42</sup> No explanation is offered by Tesauro as to how Tommaso's heroic virtue should be visualized, but if someone embodies heroic virtue, one might argue that the quality would be evident in all representations of this paragon of virtue. Yet Anthony Van Dyck's famous equestrian portrait of Prince Tommaso, which shows him as military commander, probably was more easily associated with heroic virtue than portraits without overt references.<sup>43</sup>

The association of the prince's heroic qualities with the warrior's armour is commonplace and also found in a number of other contexts. The *ballet de cour* performed in Turin in 1650 as part of the celebrations of the marriage between Marie Christine's daughter, Princess Adelaide, and the electoral prince of Bavaria, Ferdinand Maria, focused on the education of the duke and to a lesser degree on that of his sisters. In the ballet, titled *L'educatione d'Achille e delle Nereidi sue sorelle nell'isola Doro* ("The Education of Achilles and the Nereids, His Sisters, on the Island of Doro"), the duke danced the part of Achilles as well as other roles.<sup>44</sup>

According to the accompanying text (or libretto), the shining breastplates in the entry "display mirrors of heroic virtue to the audience" (fig. 7).<sup>45</sup> The young Carlo Emanuele II does not participate in this particular entry, but it is part of the ballet of Achilles, in which the duke appears, and, at the court of Savoy, court ballets in the *ballet de cour* tradition were divided into a sequence of several ballets, which were in turn divided into entries.<sup>46</sup> The duke himself

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*Il cannocchiale aristotelico* is simpler: "una quinta essenza di tutte le Virtù Pacifiche & Militari." ("the quintessence of all pacific and military virtues"), 766.

42 Tesauro, "L'Heroe," 138–39.

43 The portrait is datable to c. 1635. Turin, Galleria Sabauda.

44 The title probably is a play on various possible interpretations of Doro (and it seems unlikely that it should be interpreted as a reference to *d'oro* or golden only). It may be mentioned that Princess Adelaide danced the role of Dori in the ballet, and the river Dora is one of the important rivers of Turin.

45 Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino (hereafter cited as BNT), "esporranno ispechi dell'Heroica virtù agli spettatori." *L'educatione d'Achille*, fol.99, q.v 58. The decoration of the manuscript is attributed to Tommaso Boronio and collaborators.

46 Moreover the performances consisted of both song and dance and were performed by amateur dancers and professional singers. For ballets at the court of Savoy see Margaret McGowan, "Les Fêtes de Cour en Savoie: L'Œuvre de Philippe d'Aglié," *Revue de la Société d'Histoire du Théâtre* 22 (1970): 183–241; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, *Feste delle Madame Reali di Savoia* (Torino: Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino, 1963) and Clelia Arnaldi di Balme and Franca Varallo (eds.), *Feste barocche: Ceremonie e spettacoli alla corte dei Savoia tra Cinque e Settecento* (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2009) exhibition catalogue.





FIGURE 7 Tommaso Borghio, *L'educatione d'Achille*, c. 1650, folio showing the fourth entry of the Ballet of Achilles, *Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino*, q.v 58, fol. 100. *Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria*.

dances the part of Achilles in the first entry, whereas the mirrors of heroic virtue appear in the fourth entry of the same ballet.<sup>47</sup> What is presented here is a combination of mirrors and breastplates as part of the warrior's armour. Parts of the ballet are clearly inspired by Homer's *Iliad* in which there are several references to brightly shining arms or armour, and this seems to be intrinsically linked to great strength.<sup>48</sup> The ballet of the smiths of Vulcan is danced prior to that of Achilles, and the libretto explains the intrinsic connection of

47 The entry where Achilles participates is described on BNT q.v 58, fol. 93 (fol. 94 where the illustration would have appeared is missing).

48 For instance "glorious name. Upon his head/ And shield she caused a constant flame to play, [...] / Such light she caused to beam upon his crest/ And shoulders, [...]" and "So came the son of Priam—Paris—down/ From lofty Pergamus in glittering arms,/ And glorious as the sun, [...]" Homer, *The Iliad of Homer: Books 1–12*, trans. William Cullen Bryant, vol. 1 (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870), p. 133, bk. 5, lines 4–5 and 8–9; p. 208, bk. 6, lines 652–54.

the semi-god's new armour and his virtues. The armament made for Achilles is described not only as what is needed to attack and defend but as symbols of the virtues of a great hero. "In his breast (*petto* may here be a reference to breastplate) is found fortitude, constancy and sufferance; in the helmet prudence, vigilance and astuteness; in the backplate resilience, patience and endeavour; in the brassarts authority, justice and force; in the gauntlets swiftness, skilfulness, liberality; in the shield fearlessness, prowess and defence; in the sword valour, courage and audaciousness; in the lance the soul's greatness, magnanimity and clemency."<sup>49</sup> The armament itself appears to symbolize heroic virtue and indeed the virtues necessary to a just and capable prince. Moreover, the ballet entry where heroic virtue is mirrored seems to imply that it is not only related to the prince. In the context of a performance of ideal princely education, it may also be seen as a mirror of values to emulate, held up to the young prince and his companions.<sup>50</sup> The standard representation of heroic virtue was Hercules, and this is suggested by Cesare Ripa in his highly influential *Iconologia*, where he refers to usage in antiquity.<sup>51</sup> Hercules is also employed as a symbol of heroic virtue at the court of Savoy, as seen for instance in the carousel *Gli Ercoli Domatori de' Mostri et Amore Domatore degli Ercoli* ("Monsters Conquered by Herculeses and Herculeses Conquered by Love"), performed during the 1650 wedding celebrations.<sup>52</sup> Here the heroes are identified with *Herculeses*, who represent prominent forefathers of the bride and

49 "nel PETTO LA FORTEZZA, LA CONSTANZA, E LA SOFFERENZA, nell'ELMO LA PRUDENZA, LA VIGILANZA, E L'ACCORTEZZA, nello SCHIENALE LA ROBUSTEZZA, LA PATIENZA E LA FATICA, nei BRACCIALI L'AUTORITA LA GIUSTITIA, E LA FORZA, nelle MANOPOLE LA PRONTEZZA, LA DESTREZZA, E LA LIBERALITÀ; Nello SCUDO L'INTREPIDEZZA, LA MAESTRIA E LA DIFESA, nella SPADA IL VALORE, IL CORAGGIO, E L'ARDIMENTO, nell'ASTA LA GRANDEZZA D'ANIMO, LA MAGNANIMITÀ, E LA CLEMENZA". BNT, *L'educatione d'Achille*, fol. 86, q.v 58. The connection between the soldier or his equipment and virtue went back to antiquity. St Paul's passage on the armour of God and the battle with evil forces was particularly influential, Eph. 6:10–17. Ripa also emphasizes Virtue's need for armament in her fight against vice. Ripa, *Iconologia*, 672.

50 For parallels between the ballet and *La scuola della verità aperta a' precipi*, which may be considered a mirror for princes and was published in 1650 by the duke's preceptor, see my "The Prolonged Minority of Charles Emmanuel II," in *Sabaudian Studies: Political Culture, Dynasty, and Territory (1400–1700)*, Matthew Vester (ed.), (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2013), 191–209.

51 Ripa, *Iconologia*, 673.

52 Biblioteca Reale di Torino, *Storia Patria*, 949. See for instance the description of the Alpine Herculeses on fol. 48 as well as the illustration on fol. 46 (fol. 47 is missing). The decoration of the manuscript is attributed to Tommaso Borgonio and collaborators.

groom, and are played by male members of the court, including the duke and Prince Tommaso but not Prince Maurizio.

Both of the performances were devised by the courtier, *maggiordomo maggiore* and minister of finance Count Filippo San Martino d'Aglié.<sup>53</sup> Tesauro most likely played an important part in their making, and *L'educatione d'Achille* may also to some extent have been based on ideas by Carlo Emanuele II's preceptor, Luigi Giuglaris.<sup>54</sup>

### The Duke and the Mirror

The association of the warrior hero, and in particular the princely warrior hero, with the concept of heroic virtue is hardly surprising. More interesting perhaps is the idea of the mirror, which in fact occurs several times at the court of Savoy in the mid-seventeenth century. An engraving by Charles Audran after a drawing by Esprit Grandjean, which can be dated to the middle years of the 1640s shortly after the civil war between Marie Christine and her brothers-in-law (1639–42), shows the young Carlo Emanuele II in a mirror (fig. 8).<sup>55</sup> The duke is only present in the mirror; thus the spectator Carlo Emanuele can see his reflection in the engraving, and he is a mirror for other beholders. The duke is surrounded by significant Savoyard, French and Saxon ancestors, as well as Olympic gods, signs of the zodiac, and the sun, which is also clearly reflected in the mirror behind the duke. From the positioning of the hands of the standing putti it becomes clear that the mirror is spherical. On it is written: *UNICA SEMPER ET OMNIS*; this should probably be interpreted as a reference to the unique and all-embracing virtue of the ducal family.<sup>56</sup> In the engraving, Carlo Emanuele is represented as the focal point of the House of Savoy, as also

53 See Valeriano Castiglione, *Li Reali Himenei De' Serenissimi Principi Sposi Henrietta Adelaide di Savoia, e Ferdinando Maria di Baviera* (Torino: A.F. Cavalerij, 1651), 49–50 and 66.

54 See Viale Ferrero, *Feste delle madame reali*, 32–33; Mercedes Viale Ferrero, “Le feste e il teatro,” in *Diana trionfatrice: Arte di corte nel Piemonte del Seicento*, Michela Di Macco and Giovanni Romano (eds.), (Torino: Allemandi, 1989) exhibition catalogue, 75 and Doglio, “Letteratura e retorica,” 573, n. 8. For Giuglaris see my “Prolonged minority.”

55 The engraving is undated but there appears to be no trace of Esprit Grandjean at the court of Savoy prior to 1644. See Michela Di Macco “Quadreria di palazzo e pittori di corte: Le scelte ducali dal 1630 al 1684,” in *Figure del barocco in Piemonte: La corte, la città, i cantieri, le province*, Giovanni Romano (ed.), *Arte in Piemonte 3* (Torino: Cassa di Risparmio di Torino, 1988), 56.

56 I am grateful to Elena Dahlberg for this suggestion.



FIGURE 8 Charles Audran after Esprit Grandjean, *Allegory of Carlo Emanuele II*, c. 1644–45, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département des Estampes et de la Photographie, 50.C.5469.

suggested by the placement of the inscription.<sup>57</sup> The circle, which is emphasized by the circular dais, the placement of his ancestors, and so forth, is also an evident symbol of perfection. The combination of a convex mirror and a similar legend is found in Prince Maurizio's device; the existence of an anonymous engraving from 1655 where Maurizio is centrally placed and surrounded by ancestors as well as his device is also worth mentioning.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the duke is explicitly associated with the sun elsewhere, notably in a ballet that was performed at court around the time when Audran made his allegorical

57 See also Sergio Mamino, "Il ritratto dinastico nelle medaglie e nelle incisioni," in *Storia di Torino*, 4: 331; Di Macco, "Quadreria," 55.

58 The engraving (*Iconomantia*) is in a private collection. It is reproduced in Griseri, *Il Diamante: La Villa*, p. 21, fig. 4.



engraving. The theme of the ballet *La Fenice rinovata* ("The Renewed Phoenix") is the reconciliation of the duchess and her brothers-in-law, and it was performed in 1644. Here the duke dances the role of the sun and, as Mercedes Viale Ferrero points out, this occurs nine years prior to Louis XIV's performance as the sun in the *Ballet de la Nuit* in 1653.<sup>59</sup> The ballet was performed on the occasion of Marie Christine's birthday; Tesauro had already written a panegyric on the phoenix to celebrate the continuity of the dynasty and the birth of an heir in 1632.<sup>60</sup> In it he includes an interesting passage about the appeasing effect of the new generation—he in fact uses the metaphor of the mirror image of the generous mother.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Marie Christine is associated with the phoenix in the ballet and "is reflected in her glorious son, the rising sun."<sup>62</sup> This may also be seen as a reference to the association of the phoenix with the sun.<sup>63</sup> The capacity of the phoenix to rise from its own ashes is also related to the rays of the sun, which first burn and then contribute to rapid new growth from the ashes of the nest. Charles Audran's engraving may also refer to this mirroring of the duchess in her son, as part of the rebirth of the House of Savoy. The goddess Hera, represented with a crown on her head and a peacock at her side, bears resemblance to known portraits of Marie Christine. Both the phoenix and the peacock could symbolize eternal life and resurrection in a Christian context.<sup>64</sup> Hera is seated next to Hercules who turns towards her and gestures towards Carlo Emanuele II.

In a political context, sun symbolism and heliocentrism were influenced by astronomical discoveries, from Copernicus in the mid-sixteenth century to Kepler and Galilei.<sup>65</sup> According to Víctor Mínguez, sun symbolism was common at the Habsburg court of Spain. In Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco's *Emblemas morales*, published in Madrid in 1610 and dedicated to Philip III of Spain's extremely influential minister, the Duke of Lerma, the king's authority is represented as an emblem where the rays of the sun are reflected in a

59 Viale Ferrero, *Feste delle madame reali*, 40.

60 Emanuele Tesauro, "La Fenice: Panegirico sacro," in Tesauro, *Panegirici*, 1: 171–226. It was written on the occasion of the birth of Carlo Emanuele II's elder brother, Francesco Giacinto.

61 Tesauro, "La Fenice," 222.

62 "fattasi Specchio nel Sole nascente del glorioso Figlio." Cited in Viale Ferrero, *Feste delle madame reali*, 40.

63 See for instance Tesauro, "La Fenice," 195, 216, 224.

64 See Helga Neumann, "Symbolism of Animals", in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Erwin Fahlbusch et al. (eds.), vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 263.

65 See Víctor Mínguez, *Los Reyes Solares* (Castelló de la Plana: Publicaciones de la Universitat Jaume I, 2001), 45–46.

mirror and ignite a fire (fig. 9).<sup>66</sup> Covarrubias had been chaplain to Philip II, father of Duchess Caterina and Carlo Emanuele II's great grandfather. At the time of the publication of Covarrubias's book, Spanish influence remained marked at the court of Savoy, and it is worth noting the similarly shaped mirrors (figs. 8 and 9). According to Filippo Picinelli, Emanuele Tesauro had created an emblem on the occasion of Philip III of Spain's funeral that consisted of a concave mirror, collecting the rays of the sun and reflecting them in a single point, and the motto "AD UNUM REDIGIT." Picinelli interprets this as a symbol of the king's capacity to bring peace with the help of God. The author, who published his encyclopaedic *Mondo simbolico* in 1653 in Milan, also mentions that the sun in a mirror refers to how the person upon whom the rays are reflected will emulate the sun.<sup>67</sup> Whether or not Tesauro was involved in the content of Audran's engraving is unknown (fig. 8), but it demonstrates that the idea of the sun reflected in a mirror was known at the court of Savoy and adapted to Philip III (Duchess Caterina's half-brother) by Tesauro. Duke Carlo Emanuele's Spanish ancestors are not included in the engraving, and this may be related to the recently terminated civil war, although the mirror as such could possibly be seen as a connection. Marie Christine had been allied with France during the war and the princes with Spain; Tesauro had been loyal to the latter party. In the *Mondo Simbolico*, Picinelli mentions how a concave mirror, reflecting the rays of the sun, is a suitable symbol for amongst others the blessed and also for ministers who, in a similar manner, reflect the prince. A mirror that reflects the sun's rays and catches fire may also be associated with St Ignatius of Loyola.<sup>68</sup> The idea of the mirror as a suitable symbol for the good and just prince was common, and the notion of reflection is important in various symbolic contexts where the relation of the whole to its parts is central, as seen in Maurizio's device; this is in particular connected to the distribution of God's righteousness and love. It is also important to note that the mirror and its reflections demonstrate how scientific development is the gift of God.<sup>69</sup> Unless the presence of Hercules should be interpreted as such, there is no literal reference to heroic virtue in Audran's engraving, but it is hardly necessary. The inscription emphasizes Carlo Emanuele's impressive lineage and how the

66 Mínguez, *Los Reyes*, 117; Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Emblemas morales* (Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1610), emblem 69, 269 (Centuria III, no. 69).

67 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 405 and 407 (quote on p. 407).

68 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 405, 406 and 407.

69 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 405.

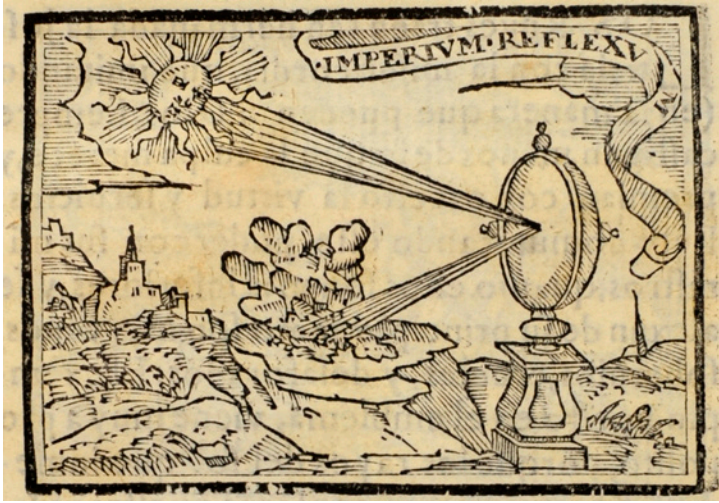


FIGURE 9 *Emblem 69, p. 269 (Centuria III) in Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, Emblemas morales, Madrid, 1610. Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli "Vittorio Emanuele III".*

future of the House of Savoy depends on him.<sup>70</sup> For the young duke, who was probably around ten when the print was made, it must have represented ideals to strive for, or a mirror for imitation. As already mentioned, the mirrors of heroic virtue in the ballet *L'educatione d'Achille* possibly should be interpreted in a similar manner, bearing in mind that although the duke was considerably older at the time of the performance of the ballet, his mother's rule continued.

The mirror therefore appears to symbolize Duke Carlo Emanuele II's heroic virtue. The shape of the mirror seems somewhat unusual. Picinelli refers to several concave mirrors that collect the rays of the sun. All examples presented here from the court of Savoy are convex; the cone is perhaps too complex for a simple characterization as convex but it curves outward, just like the breastplates and mirror in the engraving. Whether or not the reflection off a convex surface should be interpreted somewhat differently seems unclear. Jean-Vincent Blanchard notes how, at the time, the question of anamorphous

70 The inscription, which, as kindly pointed out by Elena Dahlberg, is in elegiac couplets, reads TOT REGUM HEROUMQUE GENUS, TOT CAROLE DIVIS/ CRETUS, ES, IN SPECULO QUOT TUA IMAGO REFERT// TOT REGUM HEROUMQUE GENUS TUA FORMET IMAGO/ CAROLE, SIC FUERIS MAXIMUS EMANUEL.

forms was considered particularly significant in religious circles.<sup>71</sup> The cone-shaped or cylindrical mirror is a central optical construction in this context because it can turn chaos into order.<sup>72</sup> As indicated by the title, the telescope is of utmost importance in Emanuele Tesauro's most famous work, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (The Aristotelian telescope), first published in 1654. The title itself is an oxymoron where Aristotelian observation is combined with modern scientific development in the shape of a telescope, as proof of the incorrectness of Aristotle's view on the relationship between the earth, the sun and other planets. The work is dedicated to Prince Maurizio, and his device is an integral part of the frontispiece, which is also used for subsequent editions of the work (fig. 6). In *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* Tesauro refers to the invention of this type of mirror in Paris around 1627, and adds that the court of Savoy was the recipient of one of the first of them; subsequently, it inspired Maurizio to use it as a symbol for his academy.<sup>73</sup> The reason for adapting the device was therefore, at least partly, tied to a specific event. The cone-shaped mirror and the telescope are both optical instruments. The first corrects the surroundings, and the second thoroughly investigates that which appears perfect at a distance. One could perhaps make the claim that they are opposites, another oxymoron. According to Picinelli, Tesauro had already used the telescope on the occasion of Philip III's funeral, as a symbol of the king's prudence, encompassing both his immediate and distant surroundings.<sup>74</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Might there also be a connection between the mirror and the diamond? Picinelli maintains that both are suitable symbols for the prince and that both represent purity.<sup>75</sup> Yet it does not immediately follow that there was a particular connection between these choices of symbols of heroic virtue. Marie Christine's motto, "plus de fermeté que d'éclat," seems well placed in a more masculine tradition, even though she took it before she was widowed

71 Jean-Vincent Blanchard, *L'optique du discours au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: De la rhétorique des jésuites au style de la raison moderne (Descartes, Pascal)*, La collection de la République des Lettres. Études ([Quebec]: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2005), 160.

72 Blanchard, *L'optique*, 159.

73 Tesauro, *Il cannocchiale aristotelico*, 756.

74 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 487.

75 Picinelli, *Mondo simbolico*, 363, 364, 404 and 405.

and became regent.<sup>76</sup> Although it is far from absent, religion is not at the core of Tesauro's panegyric; his focus is on Marie Christine's abilities as regent. Religious practice was of great importance to the regent, however, and diamonds in the shape of a cross indicate the possibility of a complex understanding of the relationship between religious and political greatness; the two are hardly entirely separate in seventeenth-century discourses on rulers. Tesauro's insistence on modesty should perhaps be read in this light; it appears to be a means of reconciling masculine and feminine virtues, without departing from the notion of the duchess as a great and able ruler. It may have appeared particularly pertinent to accentuate Marie Christine's heroic virtue, and the task of extolling the heroism of the princes, including Maurizio, must have been less demanding. The tangible objects used as references to heroic virtue share certain properties: they are all hard, smooth, and reflect light. Whether or not this implies a more intricate connection remains uncertain; there can be little doubt that there were many ways in which the heroic virtue of the prince could be represented, and armour, mirrors, and diamonds were all suitable symbols for rulers.

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76 Tesauro suggests that the diamond is Marie Christine's symbol and mirror but also that she is a mirror and therefore has no need for mirrors. The latter point appears related to the diamond and the intrinsic worth of the gem and the duchess. Tesauro, "Il Diamante," 6 and 96.

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# Anti-Protestant Heroic Virtue in Early Modern Rome: Queen Christina (1626–1689) and Senator Nils Bielke (1706–1765)

*Stefano Fogelberg Rota*

The supereminent character of heroic virtue made it an appropriate quality for an appraisal of royal and aristocratic personalities throughout the Early Modern period. The concept became essential for the self-fashioning of European elites. Almost in parallel, and more decidedly from the first half of the seventeenth century, heroic virtue became an indispensable requirement for the canonization process. The use of this originally Aristotelian concept in these two different fields of reception entailed both significant differences and similarities.

Both the representations of heroic virtue in panegyric literature written in Rome between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the concurrent theological discussions of the same concept, bear witness to an influence from the Catholic sphere. The aim of this chapter is therefore to analyse some examples of the representation of the heroic in which the religious aspect is brought to the fore.

The geographical and chronological limits of my investigation mean that I will be able to observe only some of the transformations that the codification of the use of heroic virtue in canonization processes entailed. I will, moreover, concentrate on works written as contributions to the confessional dispute between Catholicism and Protestantism and in particular on writings dedicated to two Swedish Catholic converts: Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689) and Count Nils Bielke (1706–1765).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While the Swedish queen is renowned for her abdication in 1654 and her subsequent abjuration of Protestantism, Bielke's life is less well known. I will therefore discuss the events that led to his conversion to Catholicism and election as senator of Rome. On Queen Christina, her abdication and conversion there is an extensive literature. For a specific view on the confessional aspect see Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-reformation in Scandinavia: The Age of Gustavus Adolphus and Queen Christina of Sweden 1622–1656* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Her conversion is also central in two classical studies of her life: Curt Weibull, *Drottning Christina: Studier och forskningar* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1931) and Sven Ingemar Olofsson, *Drottning Christinas tronavsägelse och trosförändring* (Uppsala: Appelbergs boktryckeri, 1953). Susanna Åkerman and Marie-Louise Rodén have given important contributions to the study of Christina's conversion more recently. See Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of*

While heroic virtue had been associated with royal persons almost since its conception, it acquired new significance in writings on saints during the seventeenth century. Although the concept of heroic virtue conceived in Book Seven of the *Nicomachean Ethics* had been greatly developed, especially in thirteenth-century scholastic theology through the work of Albertus Magnus and the commentaries of Thomas Aquinas, it was only in the seventeenth century that its role in canonization procedures was officially stated, during the pontificate of Urban VIII (1623–1644).<sup>2</sup> The Barberini pope's *Decreta Servanda in Canonizatione, & Beatificatione Sanctorum* (published 1642) opened up the development of a new conception of sainthood.<sup>3</sup> From the middle of the seventeenth century, it was no longer sufficient for a saintly candidate to possess only uncommonly excellent virtues. Now, these were also to be expressively 'heroic' or of the 'heroic degree'.<sup>4</sup> All future saints, except martyrs, should satisfy three basic requirements: doctrinal purity, heroic virtue and miraculous intercession after death.<sup>5</sup> Heroic virtue thus became essential for the opening of all canonization processes. The necessity of establishing a new idea of sainthood was acknowledged with the foundation in 1588 of the Congregation of Rites to regulate the processes. This major theological change in the history of the Catholic Church was brought about under the influence of the Counter-Reformation and its aim of codifying and regulating all aspects of the faith and in particular those that were directly threatened by the Protestant

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*Sweden and her Circle: The Transformation of a Seventeenth-Century Philosophical Libertine* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Marie-Louise Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome: Cardinal Decio Azzolino, Queen Christina of Sweden and the Squadrone Volante* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000) and *Drottning Christina: en biografi* (Stockholm: Prisma, 2008).

- 2 On Thomas Aquinas's commentaries see Iacopo Costa, "Heroic Virtue in the Commentary Tradition on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," in *Virtue Ethics in the Middle Ages: Commentaries on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, 1200–1500*, István P. Bejczy (ed.), (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 153–172 and Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend als Grundlage der individualistischen Ethik im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (eds.), (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996) 450–463.
- 3 *Urbani VIII Pontificis Optimi Maximi Decreta Servanda in Canonizatione, & Beatificatione Sanctorum. Accedunt instructiones & declarationes quas Em.mi S.R.E. Cardinales Praesuleque Romanae Curiae ad id muneris congregati ex eiusdem Summi Pontificis mandato condiderunt* (Roma: Rev. Cam. Apost., 1642).
- 4 On Urban VIII's decrees see Miguel Gotor, "La fabbrica dei santi: la riforma urbaniana e il modello tridentino," in *Storia d'Italia: Roma la città del papa. Vita civile e religiosa dal giubileo di Bonifacio VIII al giubileo di papa Wojtyła*, Luigi Fiorani and Adriano Prosperi (eds.), (Torino: Einaudi, 2000), 677–727.
- 5 Donald Weinstein and Rudolf M. Bell, *Saints & Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 142.

Reformation.<sup>6</sup> One of the major results of the discussions in this congregation was the institutionalization of the previous process of beatification, which gave the pope an increased control over canonizations.<sup>7</sup>

Though published first in 1642, Urban's decrees were in fact introduced between 1625 and 1634.<sup>8</sup> As early as 1622, the canonization of Saint Teresa of Avila was precedent setting for its detailed examination of heroic virtue.<sup>9</sup> The new decrees were also employed in 1629 for the beatification of Saint Cajetan of Thiene (1480–1547), founder of the order of the Theatines. The decrees in fact codified practices that had evolved over many centuries, assigning to heroic virtue the function of measuring the degree of moral excellence of the saints.<sup>10</sup> The saint was considered as morally outstanding not only because of distinguished actions or miracles but also because of his or her inclination to act spontaneously and effortlessly on a higher moral level. At the same time as the voluntary character of heroism was asserted, its supernatural aims were also stressed, as they were especially visible in the states of self-abnegation and

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6 I use the term Counter-Reformation in its generally accepted meaning of the “self-affirmation of the [Catholic] Church in the struggle against Protestantism” (“l’autoaffermazione della Chiesa nella lotta contro il protestantesimo”). Hubert Jedin, *Riforma cattolica o Controriforma?* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1957), 44. Jedin has shown how the concept of Counter-Reformation is intimately connected with that of Catholic reform as “the reflection over itself made by the Church with regard of the ideal of a catholic life achievable through an internal renewal” (“è la riflessione su di sé attuata dalla Chiesa in ordine all’ideale di vita cattolica raggiungibile mediante un rinnovamento interno”). Jedin, *Riforma cattolica o Controriforma?*, 44.

7 For a description of this development towards a new concept of sainthood and the complicated institutional debate it entailed between different congregations see Gotor, “La fabbrica dei santi”, 679–722.

8 Gotor, “La fabbrica dei santi”, 680.

9 Weinstein and Bell, *Saints & Society*, 142.

10 The most detailed description of heroic virtue's decisive role in Counter-Reformation canonizations is still Romeo De Maio, “L’ideale eroico nei processi di canonizzazione della controriforma,” in *Riforme e miti nella Chiesa del Cinquecento* (Napoli: Guida Editori, 1973), 257–278. On the importance of heroic virtue for canonization practices see also Marina Caffiero, “Tra modelli di disciplinamento e autonomia soggettiva,” in *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento*, Giulia Barone, Marina Caffiero and Francesco Scorza Barcellona (eds.), (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994), 265–281; Marina Caffiero, *La politica della santità: Nascita di un culto nell’età dei Lumi* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1996) and “Istituzioni, forme e usi del sacro,” in Giorgio Ciucci (ed.), *Roma moderna: Storia di Roma dall’antichità a oggi* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2002), 143–180. A thorough investigation of a particular canonization process in which the importance of heroic virtue is extensively treated is Pierluigi Giovannucci, *Il processo di canonizzazione del card. Gregorio Barbarigo* (Roma: Herder editrice e libreria, 2001).

sufferance.<sup>11</sup> Albertus Magnus's conception of heroic virtue as reason's annihilation of the passions had already prepared for this development in which continence appeared as a divine virtue and the foundation for the ideal of the exemplarity of Christ's life, the so called *imitatio Christi*.<sup>12</sup> Heroic virtue also played an important role in the recognition of true miracles and was considered as the main criterion to separate "bona fide miracle-workers from practitioners of magic and the black arts".<sup>13</sup> While an agent of Satan might disturb the laws of nature with sorcery, and lure people to believe he had celestial powers, someone who practised the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity to a heroic degree could not possibly be in the service of evil. The Counter-Reformation's concept of sainthood, determined as it was by heroic virtue, suited a time in which martyrs had become rare. The heroic became an important benchmark to determine sanctity's degree of excellence, to the point that saints were considered as personifications of this virtue. Heroic virtue was, because of its limitless character, finally used in seventeenth-century Catholic theological debates to claim the centrality of free will, conferring apologetic standpoints against Protestantism. Its importance is often expressed in Counter-Reformation literature and was paramount for the definition of a Catholic reaction to the Protestant Reformation. Heroic virtue was intimately connected to papal authority, as it was the pope's prerogative to stop all canonization processes, and the strongest defence for the Catholic Church in a matter—that of the saints and their cults—that was most severely attacked by Protestants. Finally, it is important to underline how the centrality of heroic virtue in Counter-Reformation theology was one of its strongest points of connection with humanism because of its belief in man's limitless possibilities.<sup>14</sup> This anti-Protestant statement was counterbalanced, on the other hand, by the objective difficulties in the imitation of such an eminent example.<sup>15</sup>

### Queen Christina's Heroic Virtue

Given the fundamental and important functional role of heroic virtue in canonization processes it is interesting to see some examples of the parallel

11 Giovannucci, *Il processo di canonizzazione del card. Gregorio Barbarigo*, 114.

12 Rudolf Hoffmann, *Die heroische Tugend: Geschichte und Inhalt eines theologischen Begriffes* (Munich: Verlag Josef Kösel & Friedrich Puster, 1933), 36–40.

13 Weinstein and Bell, *Saints & Society*, 142.

14 De Maio, "L'ideale eroico nei processi di canonizzazione della controriforma," 257.

15 Caffiero, "Tra modelli di disciplinamento e autonomia soggettiva," 268.

use of this quality in a Protestant context.<sup>16</sup> Particularly intriguing from this point of view is the case of Queen Christina who, after her abdication from the Swedish throne in 1654, became one of the most famous Catholic converts of her time. Heroic virtue is a remarkably recurrent theme in panegyrics written for Christina both during her reign in Sweden and during her time in Rome.<sup>17</sup> It appears for example in the anonymous libretto of the ballet *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*] staged on new year's day 1645 to celebrate Christina's age of majority and the beginning of her reign.<sup>18</sup> Even if this work, strictly speaking, falls out of the scope of this chapter, it is worth considering as it constitutes a relevant background to the use of heroic virtue by the authors in her circle in Rome. The praise for Christina in *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*] is presented alongside some concrete advice on how to rule the country. Though characterized by an entertainment function, this ballet was still, according to the tradition of court ballet from the late sixteenth century, consciously political and conveyed messages that lay close to the Council of the Realm (*Riksrådet*), which at that occasion was handing the rule of the country back to the young queen. Christina is, in particular, invited to marry in order to guarantee the succession of the throne with an heir. This proposition will be reversed in the following ballets performed after the beginning of her reign in order to legitimize her refusal to marry and present her as a superhuman character raised above passions.<sup>19</sup> This image is however already present in *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*]. The libretto evinces a more markedly propagandistic character after the model of the ballets performed at the beginning of the 1640s in France on behalf of

16 For a deeper analysis of heroic virtue's reception in a Protestant context see Andreas Hellerstedt's contribution in this volume and Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische tugend in der protestantischen Ethik: Von Melanchthon zu den Anfängen der finnischen Universität Turku," in *Melanchthon und Europa, vol. 1, Skandinavien und Mitteleuropa*, Frank Günter, Martin Treu and Kees Meerhoff (eds.), (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001), 129–138.

17 I have already discussed the representation of heroic virtue in some panegyric writings dedicated to Christina in "Queen Christina's heroic virtue and its religious implications," *Early Modern Culture Online*, 3:1 (2012), 1–13. I will partly display my results from this article especially for what concerns Christina's court ballets.

18 *Le Monde Reioivi Balet, Dansé pour la Regence de sa Maïesté, à Stockholm le premier de Janvier de l'Année 1645*. A Swedish version of the libretto was published with the title of *Balet, Om Heela Wårdenes Frögd förorsakadh aff Hennes Kongl. M.tz Lykelige Regeringz begynnelse Dantzat upå Stockholms Slott den 1 Januarij åhr 1645*.

19 Lars Gustafsson, "Amor et Mars vaincus: Allégorie politique des ballets de cour de l'époque de la Reine Christine," in *Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies*, Magnus Von Platen (ed.), (Stockholm: Nationalmusei skriftserie, 1966), 87–99.

Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>20</sup> *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*] stages in three acts the joy of heaven, sea and earth at the notice of the queen's ascension to the throne. The coherence of the plot is thus secured by its encomiastic theme: the praise of Christina's regal virtues. Heroic virtue stands as particularly important in this respect, appearing on stage in the fourth scene of the first act together with Honour, and just after Jupiter, Wisdom and Justice. A short prose text describes the character of heroic virtue:

This heroic virtue and honour come together to follow Christina and render her Reign as glorious as that of Gustavus. He that never decided anything without prudence, never executed anything without Justice, never engaged in any deed that was not advised by heroic virtue [...] <sup>21</sup>

Heroic virtue is introduced to underline the continuity between Christina's reign and that of her father, Gustavus Adolphus. Her sovereignty should be guided, as his was, by reason, with which earthly passions are transcended. The heroic person acts in accordance with wisdom (*prudentia*) and justice (*iustitia*), the most markedly princely qualities, which in addition to courage (*fortitudo*) and moderation (*temperantia*) make up the four cardinal virtues. This unity was performed on stage for the audience in the harmonious dance of the different characters. Heroic virtue is more closely described in some so-called *vers pour les personages*, that is, non-recited verses ascribed to the different characters:

La Vertu Heroique.

[...]

Une fille à présent vient de remplir sa place

Elle va soutenir le sceptre de sa race,

Marchant sur le sentier de ses faicts glorieux

Son invincible Estat espere en sa jeunesse,

Et l'on remarque en elle une haute hardiesse,

20 For a more detailed study of *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*] and an account of the development of court ballet in Sweden during Christina's reign see Stefano Fogelberg Rota, "L'introduzione del balletto di corte in Svezia," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome* 125:1 (2013).

21 "Cette vertu héroïque, & l'honneurs viennent ensemble pour accompagner Christine & rendre son Regne aussi glorieux que le fût celui de Gustave, qui ne resolut iamais rien sans la prudence, n'exécuta rien sans la Justice, ne fit aucune action qui ne fût avouée par la vertu héroïque [...]". *Le Monde Reioivi*. All translations are my own in this chapter.

Digne du sang suédois, digne de ses Ayeux,  
 Ses rares qualités la rendent adorable.  
 Je veux, honneur, je veux en estre inséparable,  
 Je veux estre l'appui de ses Intentions  
 Et qu'elle soit l'amour des autres nations  
 Que de ses Ennemis l'insolence elle brave  
 Et qu'elle fasse voir enfin par son grand coeur  
 Qu'elle est fille, mais de Gustave,  
 Et qu'elle porte au sein une masle vigueur.<sup>22</sup>

Christina is the worthy heir of Gustavus and the Vasa dynasty by means of that *masle vigueur* (male strength) that makes her virtuous. It is by means of this strength, instilled by her father, that Christina overcomes the limits of her gender in the moment she ascends the throne. Though a woman, she is Gustavus's daughter and therefore capable of ruling. The theme of her ancestry is reiterated several times in these verses revealing both its importance and connection with the heroic.<sup>23</sup> Heroic virtue is stressed as the pillar on which Christina's reign is grounded—"l'appui de ses Intentions" (the support of her Intentions)—and, finally, her suitability as monarch is stated. *Le Monde Reiovi* [Réjoui] must be therefore considered as a statement in the process of the legitimization of Christina's newly attained position, both before her subjects, and the rest of Europe. The use of heroic virtue during Christina's reign is thus essentially connected to her status as monarch. *Le Monde Reiovi* [Réjoui] seems interestingly to be one of the first examples of the use of the concept of heroic virtue in a Swedish context. The few previous examples are,

22 "A girl comes now to take his place she will keep up the sceptre of his race, marching on the path of his glorious deeds, her invincible State sets its hope to her youth, and a great bravery is to be observed in her, worthy of her Swedish blood, and of her ancestors, her exceptional qualities make her adorable. I want, honour, I want to be inseparable from her, I want to be the support of her Intentions and that she be loved by the other nations, that she punishes the insolence of the Enemies and that she demonstrates with her big heart that she is a girl, but Gustavus's, and that she bears in her breast a male strength." *Le Monde Reioivi*.

23 Both Karin Tegenborg Falkdalen and Malin Grundberg have convincingly argued that ancestry was more important than gender in the Swedish representations of the queen. So, for instance, Grundberg in the analysis of the celebration programme for Christina's coronation in 1650. Karin Tegenborg Falkdalen, *Kungen är en kvinna: retorik och praktik kring kvinnliga monarker under tidigmodern tid* (Umeå: Umeå universitet, 1995); Malin Grundberg, *Ceremoniernas makt: maktöverföring och genus i Vasatidens kungliga ceremonier* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2005), 196.



revealingly, panegyric discourses in praise of Gustavus Adolphus, an aspect reinforcing the importance of ancestry before gender.<sup>24</sup> Authoritative testimonies of Christina's desire to appear as a virtuous monarch are found in the dispatches of the French diplomat, Pierre Chanut (1601–1662), who was based in Stockholm between 1646 and 1651. Chanut provides several testimonies of Christina's interest in excellence in virtue. In a letter written to the secretary of state, Henri-Auguste de Brienne, at the beginning of 1648, he explains how the young queen professes a true love for “une haute vertu” (a high virtue) in which she finds joy and one that she speaks of with the same enthusiasm as the stoics.<sup>25</sup> Christina's neo-stoical discussions on virtue with Chanut are in no respect unique, but part of the general debate on virtue ethics of her time. What surprised the French diplomat is her explicit love for virtue and her limitless ambition to attain it to the highest possible degree.

Queen Christina continued to be praised for her heroic virtue even after her abdication in June 1654 and subsequent conversion, made public in Innsbruck on 3 November 1655. Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato designated her in his *Historia Della Sacra Real Maestà di Christina Alessandra Regina di Svetia* (1656) as “epilogo di tutte le virtù” (epilogue of all virtues) in which “virtù heroiche, e talenti sublimi” (heroic virtues and sublime talents) abounded.<sup>26</sup> Christina maintained her interest in the heroic after she settled in Rome. Not only was she praised for her heroic virtue; in fact, she centred her literary patronage on this concept. In the papal city, Christina promoted poetical representations of the heroic similar to that expressed in *Le Monde Reiovi* [Réjouï]. Clear evidence of this is the queen's foundation of a learned academy in Rome, Accademia Reale, the gatherings of which started as early as 1656, but which was first permanently established in 1674.<sup>27</sup> Christina's Royal Academy was of central importance for her cultural patronage and was created by the queen with the aim to legitimize her status as monarch in Rome even after her abdication. This claim was already made clear and given visibility in its name: *Reale* (Royal). It is therefore not surprising that Christina envisaged heroic virtue, with its explicitly kingly character, as the subject to be treated in the opening session

24 See chapters by Tania Preste and Andreas Hellerstedt in this volume.

25 Curt Weibull, *Drottning Christina och Sverige 1646–1651: En fransk diplomat berättar* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1970), 128.

26 Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato, *Historia Della Sacra Real Maestà di Christina Alessandra Regina di Svetia, &c. del Conte Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato* (Roma, Rev. Camera Apostolica 1656), unnumbered page in the preface and p. 27.

27 On Christina's academy, see Stefano Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning: Christina av Sverige och de italienska akademierna* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2008).

of the institution. The queen proclaims in one of the opening paragraphs of her statutes for the academy that “[t]he first public Academy gathering will be devoted to the praise of the Pope’s exceptional and heroic virtues, as it is inaugurated under the glorious protection of His Holiness”.<sup>28</sup> In the end, the opening speech of Accademia Reale did not deal with the virtue of the pope, but was more generally devoted to heroic virtue and in particular to Christina’s virtue, revealing the aim of endowing this concept with a programmatic character for the assembly. Cardinal Francesco Albizzi (1593–1684) was commissioned to hold the speech. Albizzi was a distinguished member of the College of Cardinals, a member of several congregations and actively involved in the controversy against Jansenism.<sup>29</sup> His engagement against heresies appears in the *Discorso Accademico dell’Em.mo Sig.r Cardinal degli Albizzi per l’apertura della Regia Accademia della M.tà di Svezia* (*Academic Discourse of the most Eminent Cardinal Albizzi for the inauguration of the Royal Academy of Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden*). I have analysed this discourse thoroughly elsewhere and I will therefore only refer to its main arguments here to show how Albizzi and the queen’s innermost circle in Rome developed their idea of heroic virtue.<sup>30</sup> Albizzi sets out to investigate the origin of the concept of a heroic virtue, whether or not this virtue really exists, and, if so, who is graced with such a quality. In order to answer these questions the cardinal refers to Aristotle and Torquato Tasso, who are pointed out as the two authors that more extensively developed the idea of the heroic: the former in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the latter in the epic poem, *Gerusalemme liberata* (1580). The speech is meant to suit the distinguished audience of Christina’s academy, the public gatherings

28 “La prima Accademia publica che si farà sia tutta diretta alla lode delle grandi ed heroiche virtù del sommo Pontefice, in augurarla sotto i gloriosi Auspicj della Santità Sua.” Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Costituzione dell’Accademia Reale (Montpellier-samlingen, Mss. H 258, vol. xiii) f. 150v. This statute is also reproduced in Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 97.

29 On Albizzi see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Edizioni Treccani, 1978), 144–147 and, in particular, Lucien Ceysens, *Le cardinal François Albizzi (1593–1684): Un cas important dans l’histoire du jansénisme* (Roma: Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1977).

30 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Discorso Accademico dell’Em.mo Sig.r Cardinal degli Albizzi per l’apertura della Regia Accademia della M.tà di Svezia* (Urb. Lat. 1692) f. 46r. On Albizzi’s discourse see Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 95–106; Marie-Louise Rodén, “L’anello mancante: Il discorso di apertura della Regia Accademia del cardinale Francesco Albizzi,” in *Cristina di Svezia e la cultura delle accademie*, Diego Poli (ed.), (Roma: Editrice “il calamo”, 2005), 261–269 and Susanna Åkerman, *Fenixelden: drottning Kristina som alkemist* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 2013), 208–210.

of which were attended by a considerable number of cardinals.<sup>31</sup> These are addressed in the exordium as *Purpurati Heroi* (Purpled Heroes), an expression that establishes an important ambition of Albizzi's discourse, namely to show how the heroic suits a Catholic context. Albizzi approaches the subject primarily in its religious implications and treats only briefly its knightly and martial aspects. The *Discorso Accademico* is dedicated to Christina, "magnanimous Queen that, endowed with sublime and Heroic Virtues no longer as a mortal Woman but as a Heavenly Goddess, is praised, revered and loved by the all World".<sup>32</sup> Christina is both the source and the addressee of the speech. She is, in Albizzi's description, the foremost example of heroic virtue who, as a personification of the concept, enlightens the audience, Rome and the whole world. The panegyric purpose of the *Discorso Accademico* merges naturally in a defence of Catholic faith against Protestantism as Christina's abdication and conversion are presented as the most outstanding heroic action ever. A single quotation from Albizzi's elaborated prose will state the case:

Why am I wandering on wrong paths among Antique Images enveloped by mist? It would be enough to indicate You, Sacred Queen, whose heroic virtue [...] as an enchanted spear will vanquish in shame the Strongest Enemies. Your Heroic splendour will, furthermore, with respect for the utmost goal that is God, and for the eternal Life, Heaven, and for that Love that lights your Breast and colour with purple your Mantle, disperse all doubt and drive away all shadows, and eradicate all roots. Truly, that Virtue that makes you so glorious wherever the Sun shines can hardly be considered of a common kind. In the same manner as only the brightest Stars attract the most desiring Gazes; your Virtue is not of the vulgar, nor of the Common kind, but Majestic, Heroic and Divine. In such a happy Century it inspires marvel to see how you with a more than Heroic action left your Kingdom and your Power, but not for an idle life like the nonbeliever Diocletian, but to come in humble admiration of the Holy Graves in the Vatican, after you removed the three Crowns from your precious Kingly Hair, more worthy to be in heaven than Berenike's.<sup>33</sup>

31 Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 8 and 67–69.

32 "magnanima Reina, che dotata di sublimi, et Heroiche Virtù, non più come Donna mortale, mà come Dea Celeste siete dal Mondo honorata". *Discorso Accademico dell'Em.mo Sig.r Cardinal degli Albizzi*, f. 46r.

33 "A che io mi vò male aveduto che sono trà le affumicate Pitture dell'Antiche memorie cotanto raggirando, basta che io additi Voi Sacra Reina, le cui heroiche virtù [...] come incantata langia li più Vigorosi Aversarij stenderà vergognosamente al Piano, anzi che si

Christina is here described as a superior, godlike being who enlightens the assembly with her example. She alone stands for heroic virtue with her actions and appears as the ultimate proof for Albizzi's arguments on the nature and existence of the heroic. Her sacrifice of the crown for the sake of Catholic faith proves, for Albizzi, a truly heroic virtue, far above which are named as "vulgar" and "common" virtues. Christina's qualities are in every respect supereminent ("Majestic, Heroic and Divine") surpassing even the same concept of heroic, and are all directed to vanquish "as an enchanted spear [...] the Strongest Enemies". Albizzi clearly refers here to the Protestantism abjured by the queen. Heroic virtue stands thus in accordance with Counter-Reformation theology as the main weapon to be used against heretics. The heroic manifests itself in the form of self-sacrifice guided by the individual's will to operate for the good. Heroic virtue is therefore invested with the meaning of an act of generosity aiming at a definite greater goal. Albizzi's refusal to turn back to antiquity to find examples of heroic virtue is related to Augustine's description of this quality in *De Civitate Dei* (x, 21). The doctor of the church states here that the term hero can be applied for the Christian martyrs only in a metaphorical way. Ancient heroes should not, strictly speaking, be compared to the Christian ones who are, in the end, the real heroes. Albizzi's strategy gives us further clues as to how to understand his idea of the heroic and the theological debate this concept involved in Rome during the second half of the seventeenth century. Christina's sacrifice of the throne for the sake of Catholicism stands as an action that surpasses the heroism of ancient heroes. Although her surpassing depends thus on her newly attained faith it is, nevertheless, at the same time both a religious and a political act. Christina is described as

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come il vostro Heroico Splendore, e p[er] rispetto dell'ultimo fine ch'è Dio, e la Vita imortale, il Cielo, et in riguardo al fo[n]damento della vostra Carità, che non meno vi accende il Petto, che v'imporpori il Manto, così con la sola Prese[n]za di voi medesima rimane affatto d'ogni dubitatione dileguata ogn'ombra, e dibarbata ogni radice, e per dire il vero non puo essere punto ordinaria quella Virtù che vi rende tanto veneranda ovunque scalda il Sole, perche in quella maniera, che no[n] ogni Stella, mà quelle che con più dovizia saettano i raggi, e i lampi, à se tirano la Vista cupidissima de Mortali; nella stessa guisa non il Commune, non il volgare adoprar virtù, mà l'Augusto, l'Heroico, il Divino, è quello che in Secolo sì fortunato induce stupore, e maraviglia l'haver voi con fatto più che Eroico abbandonati i Regni, e gl'Imperi, no[n] già, come il miscredente Diocletiano per menar vita otiosa, e negletta; mà per correr humilmente ad adorare i Sepolchri Sacrosan[ti] del Vaticano, l'haver involato alla Regia Chioma pretiosa treplicate Corone, et alle degne mani i scettri temuti per depositarli à i piedi della Gran Madre d'Iddio; Chioma ben più degna d'esser riposta frà le stelle, che la favolosa di Berenice." Discorso Accademico dell'Em.mo Sig.r Cardinal degli Albizzi, f. 51r-v.

actively committed to the cause of Christian faith, unlike the “nonbeliever” Diocletian who led an “idle life”. The emphasis on Christina’s active embracing of Catholicism and the comparison with Diocletian is particularly important. In the *Discorso Accademico*, just as in *Le Monde Reioivi* [*Réjouï*], heroic virtue represents a markedly royal quality. However, its political scope and function have been extended to a religious sphere. The codification of heroic virtue as one of the three requirements for the canonization of saints settled by Urban VIII’s decree had invested the heroic with a particularly anti-Protestant tone. The intimate connection between the political and the religious spheres that this signified, and which more generally characterizes the Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation and its aftermath, is evident in Albizzi’s use of heroic virtue.

However, in spite of the allusions to sainthood that a discussion on heroic virtue must have brought about in seventeenth-century Rome, nothing in Albizzi’s speech indicates any vision of Christina as a possible future saint. Nor was this even possible to conceive at the time. Urban VIII’s decree established that no process of canonization could be started until five years after the death of the candidate for sainthood. It was nonetheless permitted to start gathering evidence during life for a later process. Though it is impossible to exclude with certainty the idea that Albizzi was preparing for Christina’s possible future canonization, biographical and textual evidence negate this. The queen’s much debated controversial behaviour after the abdication would have made this a difficult path. In particular, the execution of Marquise Giovanni Rinaldo Monaldeschi, ordered by the queen in Fontainebleau in 1657 for his supposed betrayal of the plans for a *coup d’état* in Naples, was a major hindrance for a later canonization.<sup>34</sup> In a letter to Cardinal Azzolino, dated 15 September 1666, Christina herself dismisses the plans of a certain Father Fonzio to gather evidence for her sainthood. She writes that Fonzio is “wasting his time praying to God that I will become a saint”.<sup>35</sup> The strongest evidence against the possibility that Albizzi was preparing the ground for a future canonization are nonetheless to be found in the speech itself, in which he never mentions the word saint or any of its derivatives. In any case Albizzi draws consciously on the theological debate on heroic virtue within the Catholic Church attested throughout the seventeenth century by the great number of dissertations on the subject. An important example is Cardinal Lorenzo Brancati da Lauria’s discussion

34 On Monaldeschi’s death, see Curt Weibull, *Drottning Christina och Monaldesco* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1936).

35 Kristina, *Brev och skrifter*, Marie Louise Renata Rodén (ed.), trans. by Cecilia Hultdt and Viveca Melander (Lund, 2006), 130.

on the voluntary dimension of the heroic in his *De virtute heroica* from 1668, published as a *disputatio* in his work on John Duns Scotus.<sup>36</sup> Hoffman considers Brancati's disputation as central for the development of the notion of heroic virtue.<sup>37</sup> His appointment as member of the Congregation of Rites is further evidence of his importance. Brancati's discussion seems to stand at the crossroad between the theological debate on heroic virtue's importance in the beatification processes and Albizzi's academic endeavours. Brancati builds on Augustine's abovementioned opinion in the Tenth Book of *De Civitate Dei* in order to underline the concept of a truly Christian heroic virtue as founded in the imitation of Christ and divinely inspired towards self-abnegation. This Christian heroic virtue pertains more markedly to the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, while the four cardinal virtues—wisdom, justice, courage and moderation—are employed to a different heroic degree. By means of this distinction, Brancati conceives therefore both a worldly and a Christian heroic virtue. These two are, finally, both traceable and active in Albizzi's praise of Christina in which her regal virtues serve the cause of the Catholic Church. Her abdication and conversion is conveyed as both an act of self-abnegation for the sake of religion and, at the same time, as a triumph of her royal status.

The twofold character of heroic virtue in Albizzi's *Discorso Accademico*, religious and political at the same time, must be considered from the perspective of the pope's double authority in Early Modern time, both secular and spiritual, as examined by church historian Paolo Prodi.<sup>38</sup> Prodi convincingly discusses how the concept of the king-pope that developed from the middle of the fifteenth century, as a result of the anticonciliar line that emerged from the Council of Basel (1431–1445), has to be considered as a step in the formation of the modern state in Europe, although the state of the church did not itself fulfil this process. The development of the papacy—from a medieval and universalistic concept of the church to its status as a Renaissance principality—did not only entail its own politicization but also a sacralization of the power of the other Christian princes, thus being influential in the

36 Lorenzo Brancati da Lauria, "De Virtute Heroica," in *Commentaria Fr. Laurentii Brancati De Laureaea Ordinis Minorum Conven. S. Francisci Universit. Rom. Professoris Theologi, ss. Congrega. Indul. ac Reliq. Rituum, & S. Officij Consultoris, & Qualificat nec non episcoporum Examinatoris. In Tertium Librum Sent. Mag. Fr. Ioannis Duns Scoti Eiusdem ordinis. Tomus secundus. In quo continentur disputationes xxxii. De virtutibus in genere; De quatuor Cardinalibus, earumq; speciebus; & de Haeroica* (Roma: Corbelletti, 1668).

37 Hoffman, *Die heroische Tugend*.

38 Paolo Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: il Mulino, 1982).



emergence of absolutism. The visibility of papal authority and the universal power of its propagandistic expressions appealed to other European monarchs, even over the confessional boundaries. Early modern papacy, with its characteristic and indissoluble connection of secular and spiritual, would have thus contributed indirectly, and somewhat paradoxically, to the formation of the confessional states even in Protestant countries.<sup>39</sup> The Counter-Reformation accelerated this development contributing to the centralization of power in the person of the pope. It is therefore tempting to connect one of the first appearances of heroic virtue in Sweden—the above-discussed ballet *Le Monde Reioivi* [Réjouï]—with Christina's absolutistic tendencies throughout her life. It would do here to recall her struggle for autonomy against the Council of the Realm and Chancellor Oxenstierna in Sweden, as well as her support for the so-called *squadron volante* in Rome, whose action as a party in the Sacred Collegium aimed for the independence of the papacy in relation to the Catholic powers.<sup>40</sup> Although I will not examine this aspect further—that would require a particular investigation and probably add important insights for the story of absolutism in Sweden—here it will suffice to register the absolutistic tendencies underlying the expression of heroic virtue both in *Le Monde Reioivi* [Réjouï] and in Albizzi's *Discorso Accademico*.

The importance of the concept of heroic virtue for the activity of Accademia Reale is finally confirmed by another discourse on the subject, the *Anonymi recentioris tractatus de virtute heroica* conserved among the *Codices Reginales*, Christina's book and manuscript collection at the Vatican Library.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, this anonymous and undated speech starts off in the same manner as Albizzi's with praise for Christina's heroic virtue:

39 Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, 23–24. On confessionalism in Sweden see Nils Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel: Myt och retorik i Haquin Spegels predikokonst* (Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag, 1999).

40 On Christina's reign and her struggle for autonomy see Weibull, *Drottning Christina: Studier och forskningar* and Olofsson, *Drottning Christinas tronavsägelse och trosförändring*. On the *squadron volante* and her involvement in their politics see Rodén, *Church Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome*. Finally, on Christina's absolutistic tendencies during her reign in Sweden see, in this same volume, the articles of Tania Preste and Andreas Hellerstedt, and I thank both for the rich and generous exchange of insights on this particular matter. I also thank Mila Fumini (Bologna) for her insights in the matter of the canonization of saints in Early Modern Rome.

41 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Anonymi recentioris tractatus de virtute heroica* (Reg. Lat. 2026). Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 106–111. On Christina's manuscript and book collection see Eva Nilsson Nylander, *The Mild Boredom of Order: A Study in the History of the Manuscript Collection of Queen Christina of Sweden* (Lund: Lund university, 2011).



A truly Heroic action is to elevate Virtue, and with the Northern wind of your Royal protection clear the Sky from the clouds of ignorance. This heroic deed is Your Majesty's high merit, because You with the strength of your own Virtue have managed to find a light that not only fills, but also flows over, and lets the indisputable truth triumph in your Kingly breast after a truly Heroic decision. Therefore everyone can justly admire you as the Heroine of our Century by means of an action that is so much greater because it is entirely the result of your mighty intellect with which, over confused and unclear misconceptions, truth triumphed. So, after having listened to the most learned persons from both the Protestant and Non-protestant schools you greatly and decidedly say with the great Saint Augustine: I search for a logic that does not fear death.<sup>42</sup>

As in Albizzi's speech, Christina alone represents heroic virtue through her example. The queen stands as its personification by virtue of her moral excellence, which is illustrated by her abdication and conversion to Catholicism. The heroism of her actions lies in her capacity to repudiate the Protestant faith of her country to embrace the "undisputable truth" of Catholicism. This is a "truly Heroic decision" born solely in her royal breast. The expressions of heroic virtue presented in this discourse are very similar to those of Albizzi and are focused on the theme of sacrifice, both in its Christian and neo-stoical sense. After this *exordium* it is, however, interestingly developed in a slightly different sense than in the *Discorso Accademico*. The author introduces after this initial praise of the queen, the theme of the Trojan War. The focus lies here on the necessity of overcoming oneself in order to become a true hero and win a posthumous reputation. This is discussed in conjunction with a critique of the unworthy praise that some heroes have received in history. This is the case of Aeneas who, according to the anonymous writer, betrayed the Spartans. The author's strategy in the use of antique *exempla* is to cite

42 "Eroica attione in vero è sollevare la Virtù, e che con la Tramontana della Vostra Regia Protezione si rischiarì il Cielo offuscato dalle nuvole dell'ignoranza. Et è ben dovuta alla M[aestà] V[ostra] questa così Eroica impresa, mentre frà le tenebre della più cieca miscredenza hà saputo con la propria Virtù trovar lume non solo bastante, mà soprabondante per far trionfar' con risolutione veramente Eroica nel Regio petto una incontrastabil' verità: onde con ragione vi puol'ammirare ciaschuno per l'Eroina del nostro Secolo in una attione tanto più grande, quanto ch'è stata puramente parto del vostro grand'intelletto di voler trà gli errori più confusi, et implicati far che ne resti trionfante la verità; e dopo haver' sentito le più dotte, e famose persone di tutte le schuole Protestanti, e Miscredenti con generosa risolutione dir con il gran' Santo Agostino Ad logicam pergo, quae mortis non timet ergo". Anonymi recentioris tractatus de virtute heroica, f. 1r.

personalities whose moral qualities do not meet the excellence of Christina's heroic virtue, in order to praise the queen even more. King Priam and his son Paris are presented as examples of two characters who did not manage to stand over their passions and fell into ruin because of them. As Albizzi, the anonymous writer downplays the achievement of the ancients in order to emphasize a Christian standpoint on virtue. Priam's fault seems even greater to the author as, while Paris was resigned to his love for Helen, Priam failed towards justice when he pursued the war to protect his son. Acting against the principles of reason is thus considered as worse than being defeated by the passion of love. The Aristotelian origin of this discussion, and its later thirteenth-century development, in which rationality is considered the highest goal is unmistakable. A neo-stoic attitude is equally important in this discourse and is likewise connected to Catholic standpoints. Reason and faith are associated when the anonymous author states that "Great is the power of reason, its Kingdom has no boundaries because its Realm is Heaven".<sup>43</sup> Christina's victory over herself and her earthly passions is sanctioned by heaven. The author concludes this discourse, and the evaluations of the heroes of antiquity, by showing how heroic virtue is essential to subjugate passions and attain posthumous honour:

With Troy's fall my discourse ends. Even if its aim has not been the Heroic Virtue in the actions of a Hero, it has had as scope to reveal the mistake of those who want to distort it with false heroes, and let the World know that it is not the power of Gold that produces Heroic subjects, so that one can live on as a hero in posterity, but it is through a victory over oneself and one's own passions, in order to accomplish noble deeds.<sup>44</sup>

These are exactly the same aims as those of Albizzi, that is, to state the superiority of Christian virtues in relation to those of antiquity. Nonetheless, it should be noted that even in this second speech, Christina is mostly compared to other princely characters, which reinforces the royal tone of her virtuous

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43 "Gran potenza è la ragione, il suo Regno non hà confini, perché la sua Regia è il Cielo". *Anonymi recentioris tractatus de virtute heroica*, f. 4r.

44 "Mà già con la caduta di Troia termina il mio discorso; il quale se non avrà havuto per scopo di Virtù Eroica le attioni di un Eroe l'haverà havuto almeno di rimostrare l'inganno di quelli, che vogliono adulterarla con falsi eroi facendo conoscere al Mondo, che il superar se stesso nel vincer i proprij affetti, e far' attioni degne, e non la potenza dell'Oro danno Eroica materia per viver come tale nella memoria de' posterì." *Anonymi recentioris tractatus de virtute heroica*, f. 8v.

appearance. This more political tone in the portrayal of Christina is, just as in Albizzi's speech, closely related to her contribution to the Catholic faith as the embodiment of the ideal of the righteous Christian prince. The association of antique and Christian models—in which the latter are expressly considered as superior—in the elaboration of this highly idealized figure is revealed in the title of a later discourse to be held on heroic virtue in Christina's Accademia Reale. The theme, contained in a list of subjects for later discussion, is "If heroic virtue's merits lie more in operating or in suffering".<sup>45</sup> This title reiterates the two poles of the discussion on the heroic in Queen Christina's circle: the active political action it brings forth and the enduring of sufferance in the name of faith.

The concept of the virtuous monarch expounded both by Albizzi and the anonymous author is part of the long tradition of the ideal Christian monarch, deeply committed to the propagation of the faith. In considering the figure of the perfect Christian monarch it might be appropriate to refer to an example that stood close, both in time and spirit, to Christina, namely Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria (1614–1662). Leopold Wilhelm, who had personally received Christina's private abjuration of Protestantism in Brussels on 23 December 1654, was the brother of emperor Ferdinand III (1608–1657) and uncle of Leopold I (1640–1705). Archbishop and military commander, Leopold Wilhelm was governor of the Spanish Netherlands between 1646 and 1656, where he had created a magnificent court strongly influenced by the cultural heritage of the Italian Renaissance. Leopold Wilhelm was also master of the Teutonic knights, an office he effectively took on in 1634 when he swore the oaths of poverty, chastity and obedience, as well as a fervent patron of the arts and a poet. The important role of his stepmother, Eleonora Gonzaga (1598–1655), for the courtly practices of the Habsburg courts, which found its foremost expression in the great presence of Italian artists and writers, appealed strongly to Christina, who stayed in Flanders for nine months after her abdication, and inspired her cultural patronage.<sup>46</sup> Her first gatherings of academic

45 "Se la virtù heroica meriti più nell'oprare, ò nel soffrire". Biblioteca Comunale (Jesi), Archivio Azzolino, *Problemi* vol. 194:2. The whole list is given as an appendix in Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 373.

46 Rossana Caira has studied the exemplary model of the Italian Renaissance courtly practices on the Habsburg courts in, among other works, "Ritratto di un principe 'esemplare' nella biografia di Nicola Avancini: Leopoldo Guglielmo d'Austria vescovo e guerriero, poeta e collezionista," in *Né sacra né profana: La meditazione tra linguaggi filosofici e letterari*, Benedetta Papasogli (ed.), (Roma: Edizioni studium, 2006), 107–138 and "Poesia e

assemblies in Rome during the spring of 1656 were for instance influenced by the Italian academies organized by Empress Eleonora in Vienna the same year.<sup>47</sup> Leopold Wilhelm's activity in Eleonora's academy resulted in a poetry collection, *Diporti del Crescente: Divisi In Rime Morali, Devote, Heroiche, Amoroze* (1656), published with his academic pseudonym, *Il Crescente*, and had a whole section dedicated to heroic compositions.<sup>48</sup> In his poetry, the archduke praises the role of the poet alongside that of the warrior, after the model of Baldassare Castiglione's influential *Il libro del Cortegiano* (1528).<sup>49</sup> Leopold Wilhelm also focuses on the common theme of the vanity of human affairs, an aspect that is also central in a biography written about him by Nicola Avancini in 1667 with the revealing title, *Le Prince Devot et Guerier Ou Les Vertus Heroïques De Leopold Guillaume*.<sup>50</sup> Among the many parallels, we should also mention that Christina on the occasion of her foundation of the Order of the Amaranth in 1653 adopted the same ideals as those proposed by the archduke. The order had the outspoken aim to glorify her refusal of marriage and its members were obliged to swear an oath of chastity.<sup>51</sup>

To sum up, although Christina's circle in Rome, and in particular Albizzi, prove to be highly aware of the theological debate on heroic virtue, in their praise for the queen they only indirectly hint at the possible implications of their use of this quality. The heroic virtue they present seems therefore to remain confined by the boundaries of its kingly character, in its absolutistic version. They seem therefore to concentrate more on the heroic as it pertains to excellence in the worldly cardinal virtues. Christina was actively promoting, through the concept of heroic virtue, her status in Rome as queen without a kingdom. This was an endeavour that perhaps involved her active faculties more than her contemplative ones.

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musica a Vienna nella seconda metà del diciassettesimo secolo," in *Letteratura e Musica*, vol. 11, J. Möstrup, P. Spore, C.-K. Jørgensen (eds.), (Odense, 1997), 505–518.

47 Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 63–64 and 332.

48 Leopold Willhelm, *Diporti del Crescente: Divisi In Rime Morali, Devote, Heroiche, Amoroze* (Bruxelles: Giov. Mommartio, 1656).

49 Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, Ettore Bonora (ed.), (Milano: Mursia, 1991).

50 *Le Prince Devot et Guerier Ou Les Vertus Heroïques De Leopold Guillaume*.

51 The foundation of the Order of the Amaranth took place during the performance of a so-called *Wirtschaft*, a sort of ballet common in German courtly milieus in which dance, drama and song were brought together. Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning*, 190–191; Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and her Circle*, 146; Kurt Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken: Studier i svensk barock* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 176–177.

### Senator Nils Bielke's Heroic Virtue

The context in which Roman Senator Nils Bielke was praised for his heroic virtue in Rome during the second half of the eighteenth century was markedly different. Although, as we shall see, it is not possible to connect the panegyric representations of his life univocally with a canonization process in his case either, they also refer to the theological debate on heroism and uses different *topoi* from hagiographic literature. The examination of heroic virtue in the panegyrics written in praise of Bielke will, moreover, stand out as even more important if we consider that cardinal Prospero Lambertini (1675–1758; the future Benedict XIV) published his treatise *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione* in 1737. Here he resumed previous stances on the requirements for sainthood—in particular Brancati's—and stressed the importance of heroic virtue.<sup>52</sup> Before I start my analysis of the heroic expressions dedicated to Bielke it is, however, necessary to give an account of his adventurous life.

Nils Bielke was the eldest son of Count Karl Gustav Bielke, heir of the fortune and fame of this important Swedish aristocratic family that counted two Swedish queens among its ancestors.<sup>53</sup> Bielke's interest in Catholicism apparently arose during his stay as a youth in Paris where his father had been dispatched as Swedish ambassador.<sup>54</sup> At the brilliant French court of Louis xv

52 *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione liber tertius auctore Prospero de Lambertinis s.r.e. cardinali tit. S. Crucis in Hierusalem Anconae primum Episcopo, postea Archiepiscopo Bononiae* (Bologna, 1737). Cfr. Giovannucci, *Il processo di canonizzazione del card. Gregorio Barbarigo*, 113.

53 Birgitta Turesdotter (d. 1436) married Karl VIII Knutsson (1408–1470) and Gunilla Bielke (1568–1597) married Johan III (1537–1592).

54 *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke Senatore di Roma date in luce da un suo confidente e consacrate All'E.mo, e R.mo Principe il Signor Cardinale Gio. Costanzo Caracciolo coll'aggiunta della cronologia de' senatori romani* (Roma: Generoso Salomoni, 1769), 12–13 and *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke fu senatore amplissimo di Roma scritta dal padre Fr. Francesco dello Spirito Santo Dell'ordine Scalzo della ss. Trinità della Redenzione de' Schiavi, Consultore della Sagra Congregazione delle Indulgenze e Sacre Reliquie, e Qualificatore della Santa Romana Universale Inquisizione* (Venezia: Antonio Graziosi, 1770), 10. This second biography was translated to German only three years after its publication in Italian: Franciskus von H. Geist, "Leben und Thaten des berühmten römischen Senators Nicolaus Bielke," in *Magazin zum Gebrauch der Staaten- und Kirchengeschichte*, 3, (Frankfurt-Leipzig, 1773), 403–452.

Julia Svedelius dates Bielke's first interest for Catholicism as early as his childhood in Sweden in her documentary novel *Nils Bielke: Från Salsta till Capitolium* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1949).

during the time of the *Régence* (1715–1723), Bielke acquired, according to his Swedish biographers, not only an inclination towards Catholicism but also a taste for magnificence that, supposedly, strongly appealed to his vanity.<sup>55</sup> However contradictory Italian and Swedish biographers are in their judgement on his life—the former unreservedly positive and the latter equally negative—they all agree on the fact that it was because of his Catholic faith that Bielke definitively left his home country at the end of the 1720s to settle first in Venice and then in Rome.<sup>56</sup> His voluntarily exile from Sweden also meant an obligatory separation from his wife, Hedvig Elisabeth Sack, whom he had married in 1727, as the result of a prohibition to travel abroad decreed by the Council of the Realm. This decision had been taken after a petition from Nils Bielke's father, Karl Gustaf Bielke, who feared for his son's conversion. The couple would never meet again but upheld a correspondence for almost thirty years.<sup>57</sup> Separated from his wife, his family and his home country, Bielke abjured Protestantism privately in the chapel of Pope Clemens XII (1652–1740) at the Quirinal Palace and was shortly thereafter employed as his “Cavaliere Segreto e Gentiluomo d'onore”.<sup>58</sup> The secrecy of the arrangement was made necessary by Swedish law that decreed the confiscation of all properties belonging to Catholics. The exceptional honours bestowed on Bielke were the result of the letters of recommendation written for him by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI and, especially, by Louis XV of France, with whom Bielke was well acquainted since his time in Paris.<sup>59</sup> The following events proved the importance attributed by Clemens XII to his conversion. After the decease of Roman senator Mario Frangipani at the beginning of 1737, the pope elected Bielke to the prestigious

55 Sigrid Leijonhufvud, “En landsflyktning,” in *Ur Svenska herrgårdarsarkiv* (Stockholm: Norstedt och söner, 1902), 103–156 and “Nils Bielke,” in *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, vol. 4 (Stockholm, 1927), 273–276. Especially critical is Carl Bildt, *Svenska minnen och märken i Rom* (Stockholm: Norstedt och söner, 1900), 39–48.

56 I discuss these and others events connected to Bielke's life in “La Roma arcade del senatore svedese Nils Bielke,” in *The City of the Soul: The Literary Making of Rome*, Sabrina Norlander Eliasson and Stefano Fogelberg Rota (eds.), (Stockholm: Suecoromana, 2015), 57–71.

57 For Bielke's correspondence with his wife, which lasted between 1730 and 1758, see Fogelberg Rota, “La Roma arcade del senatore svedese Nils Bielke” and “Education, Pilgrimage and Pleasure: The Rhetorical Strategies in the Writings of Three Early Eighteenth-century Swedish Travellers to Italy,” in *From Site to Sight: The Transformation of Place in Art and Literature*, Victor Plahte Tschudi and Turid Karlsen Seim (eds.), (Roma: Institutum Romanum Norvegiae, 2013), 123–137.

58 *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke*, 24.

59 *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke*, 68.

office.<sup>60</sup> The senatorial institution was by that time, and had been for several centuries, divested of the political and juridical role it once had during antiquity. The Roman senate was since the thirteenth century represented by a single person, formally head of the Capitoline Tribunal. The title of senator was in practice an exclusively representative charge.<sup>61</sup> However, the office was held in great esteem and the choice by Clemens XII meant a renewed interest in the cause of Catholicism in northern Europe. The anti-Protestant drive that characterized post Counter-Reformation Rome was, though strongly diminished in the first half of the eighteenth century, far from being completely extinguished.<sup>62</sup> From this perspective the election of a Swedish convert as senator was particularly effective as it naturally connected the event to Queen Christina's influential example from the previous century. An important parallel, of highly symbolical meaning, occurred when Bielke took possession of the office on 5 May 1737 by means of a procession from the Quirinal to the Capitol, an event that recalled Christina's triumphal entry in Rome on 23 December 1655.<sup>63</sup> The remainder of Bielke's career as senator of Rome was not as successful as its beginning. The death of his benefactor Clemens XII in 1740 worsened his financial situation, which was severely compromised by the expense of the lavish procession, and finally obliged him to retire to private life. Bielke lived in Rome isolated both from his home country and from his new surroundings. The Roman nobles, resentful of his election as senator, kept him at a distance. He still maintained contact with Sweden by means of his correspondence with his wife and with his influential brother-in-law, the diplomat and statesman Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770). Apart from these few contacts with Sweden, that together with the presence of passing Swedish travellers in Rome were his only relations to his native country, Bielke developed an idealized image of Sweden expressed primarily in his correspondence. In the letters to his wife and to Tessin, Bielke proclaims himself to be the bearer of a Swedish Catholic

60 Salvatore Rebecchini, "Nicolò Bielke, nobile svedese. Senatore di Roma," in *Strenna dei Romanisti: Natale di Roma* (Roma: Staderini editore, 1967), 377.

61 The senator had at his disposal three magistrates, *conservatori*, that held the duty of judging in controversies regarding the Roman people. Claudio De Dominicis, *Membri del Senato della Roma pontificia: Senatori, Conservatori, Caporioni e loro Priori e Lista delle famiglie dirigenti secc. X–XIX* (Roma: Fondazione Marco Besso, 2009), 5.

62 Cfr. Stefania Nanni, *Roma religiosa nel Settecento: Spazi e linguaggi dell'identità cristiana* (Roma: Carocci editore, 2000); Mario Rosa, *Settecento religioso: Politica della Ragione e religione del cuore* (Venezia: Marsilio 1999).

63 *Relazione della cavalcata Fatta in occasione del solenne Possesso di Senatore di Roma preso alli 5. Maggio 1737. Dall'Illustrissimo, ed Eccellentissimo Sig. Conte Niccolò Bielke* (Roma, 1737).



tradition, for which he credits pre-Reformation Swedish personalities like Saint Birgitta and Saint Erik, alongside Queen Christina.<sup>64</sup> Bielke acted, moreover, as protector of Birgitta's Church in Piazza Farnese in Rome where he was buried after his death in 1765. The funereal monument raised in his memory became thus a site of pilgrimage for Swedish Catholics.<sup>65</sup>

Among the extant sources on Bielke's life, the two biographical writings published some years after his death are of particular interest for this article: *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke senatore di Roma* (Rome 1769) and *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke fu senatore amplissimo di Roma* (Venice 1770).<sup>66</sup> Interestingly one of the most salient distinctions between the two biographies concerns precisely the presence, or absence, of references to Bielke's heroic virtue. While these are abundant in the *Memorie istoriche*, there are none in *Della vita e gesta*. This is remarkable if we consider that the Swedish senator is praised for exactly the same actions in both biographies. I will therefore concentrate my analysis on the *Memorie istoriche* and compare it with the second text, so that the gaps and displacements between them help us to understand the function heroic virtue assumed in this first biography and its overall design in the praise of Bielke.

A first explanation of the differences between the biographies could be connected with the anonymous character of the first. Both the *Memorie istoriche* and *Della vita e gesta* were probably based on the accounts of Francesco dello Spirito Santo, Bielke's confessor, though his name is expressly stated only in the title of the latter. A notice in the title of the *Memorie istoriche* informs the reader that they were "date in luce da un suo confidente" (made public by his confidant).

A more general consideration has to be introduced here: although it has not been possible to determine if the *Memorie istoriche*—with its stress on Bielke's heroic virtue—was intended to strengthen the case for Bielke in a later canonization process, it nonetheless displays some of the strategies from hagiographic literature.<sup>67</sup> For one, if the biography did have this intention, it would have been necessary, at least to a certain extent, to conceal it. One of the main restrictions that had been introduced with the decrees of Urban VIII concerned precisely the publication of texts presenting the virtues, martyrdom, prophecies and miracles of some personality that had distinguished him- or

64 Fogelberg Rota, "La Roma arcade del senatore svedese Nils Bielke".

65 Fogelberg Rota, "Education, Pilgrimage and Pleasure".

66 See note 54.

67 A first survey in the archive of the Congregation of Rites has given negative results to the question of whether there is any request for the initiation of Bielke's beatification process.

herself in the service of God before these had been officially sanctioned by the diocesan order, that is, before a canonization process had officially been started.<sup>68</sup> Another important constraint was the prohibition to publish biographical writings intended as testimonies for future canonization processes within the first five years after the candidate's death.<sup>69</sup> The *Memorie istoriche* violated, if only by one year, this interdiction. The prohibition created a paradoxical situation as it stood in contradiction with another essential requirement in order to start a process, namely the renown for sanctity that should surround the candidate for sainthood.<sup>70</sup> A solution came a few years after the publication of the decrees, when the possibility of anonymously gathering information for a later process was introduced. Yet if the aim of the biography was not a canonization process, but only to praise Bielke's virtuous life, it would be equally important to avoid the risk of being accused of presenting it as the life of a saint. The particular circumstances regarding the publication of the *Memorie istoriche* are thus of great importance for the question of its intentions. The anonymous author dedicated his work to Giovanni Costanzo Caracciolo, who had been appointed cardinal in 1759 during the pontificate of Clemens XIII (1693–1769). Caracciolo was, at the time for the publication, a magistrate in the Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the highest judicial authority of the Catholic Church after the pope himself. Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini (1685–1770), the nephew of Clemens XII (who had received Bielke's abjuration), headed this tribunal. Although these connections require further research, there emerges a net of relations for which the praise of Bielke might have been potentially profitable. Finally, the editor of the *Memorie istoriche* was, interestingly, Generoso Salomone, who had published several lives of saints as well as a shortened re-edition of Cardinal Lambertini's treatise on sainthood.<sup>71</sup>

The constraints introduced by the decrees of Urban VIII and confirmed by Cardinal Lambertini (later Benedict XIV), seem thus to have had some sort of influence on the publication of the *Memorie istoriche* even if this biography

68 Giovannucci, *Il processo di canonizzazione del card. Gregorio Barbarigo*, 58, note 131.

69 Gotor, "La fabbrica dei santi", 680; *Urbani VIII Pontificis Optimi Maximi Decreta*, 3.

70 On this particular topic see, once again, Giovannucci's work and in particular paragraph 1.2 "Gli obiettivi minimi dell'inchiesta canonica: fama di santità e virtù in grado eroico," in Giovannucci, *Il processo di canonizzazione del card. Gregorio Barbarigo*, 106–111.

71 The shortened edition of Lambertini's work is M. de Azevedo, *Benedicti XIV doctrina de Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione in synopsis redacta* (Roma, Generoso Salomoni, 1757), while the first edition is *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione*.

cannot with reasonable certainty be considered to be intended for a canonization process. Nevertheless, on an explicit level, the motives behind the publication of the *Memorie istoriche* are clearly stated in the dedication to Cardinal Giovanni Costanzo Caracciolo:

The first [reason] is the interest of Catholic Religion, of which you are one of the Cornerstones that sustain it, in uniting in its womb, during the first years of the Highest Priesthood of His Holiness CLEMENS XII, one of the most remarkable and notable Personalities that Sweden can pride itself with; [...]<sup>72</sup>

Hence the main reason to publish a biography of Bielke is the exemplarity of his life and for the benefit of the Catholic Church. The dedication continues by underlining Bielke's disinterest in and disdain for earthly matters. His voluntary exile from Sweden was spurred mainly by his denial of worldly interests for the glory of God:

He believed it was a glory for him, in his most tender youth, to go in voluntary exile from his Country; to part himself with generous heart from the arms of loving Parents and from the love of his beloved Wife; to renounce with indifference the hopes and promises he held at Court; to abandon forever the comfort and the abundance of his Home in order to buy as a new evangelical merchant the singular precious jewel of the Roman Faith.<sup>73</sup>

The theme of the Christian sacrifice is here employed to underline the importance of Bielke's conversion. Although this theme was also evident in the discourses held in Queen Christina's Accademia Reale, it was there more strongly determined by the praise of her regal magnificence, whereas Bielke's abnega-

72 "Il primo si è l'interesse della Cattolica Religione, di cui Voi siete uno de' Cardini più eminenti, che la sostengono, nel riunire che fece al suo grembo, ne' primi anni del Sommo Sacerdozio della San: me: di CLEMENTE XII. uno de' più cospicui, e ragguardevoli Personaggi, che nel nostro secolo vantar possa la Svezia; [...]" *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, iv.

73 "Stimò Egli sua gloria, nel più verde degli anni, il farsi esule volontario dalla Patria; il distaccarsi con cuore generoso, e magnanimo dalle bracce de' teneri Genitori, e dalla tenerezza dell'amata Consorte; il renunziare con indifferenza alle speranze, e promesse della Corte; l'abbandonare per sempre gli agj, e dovizie della Casa per far acquisto qual novello vangelico Mercadante, dell'unica preziosa gioja della Fede Romana." *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, v-vi.

tion of all that is worldly is contrasted with the honours his election entailed. This problematic passage is resolved by the affirmation of his endurance even of the privileges and tributes his status demanded; this is a theme that becomes striking apparent in the key episode of his election to senator. Bielke's elevation to this prestigious office and all the honours it involved are described as being an annoyance for him. The anonymous author relates Bielke's disposition at the notice of his elevation as senator, and during the ceremonies that followed, in this passage:

But nonetheless he sacrificed all his appearance to obedience, and conserved inside himself a true and Christian mortification, though Rome was celebrating in every corner because it could observe that our Count seemed in this public function as though adorned by an exterior Majesty, worthy of the greatness of his birth, and much more worthy of his soul, because he had reached the Holy Faith with the more noble and majestic decoration of his heroic virtues. Rome recognized thus in our Count a Senator who because of his distinguished merits would immortalize his name, leave in blessing his memory and give new luster to the Dignity performed by his Predecessors. His glorious actions would finally perpetuate in this Office his great Name and for eternity confuse on the Capitol the Lutherans and all other Erethics, enemies of sound and true glory.<sup>74</sup>

This first reference to Bielke's heroic virtues is of particular importance as it is connected to the "true and Christian mortification" of his feelings, naturally reluctant, according to the anonymous writer, to honours and praise. Bielke's virtues are denominated in plural, just as in the discourses addressed to Christina, denoting that higher degree of excellence that perfects all other virtues permitting whoever is in possession of them to surpass their common

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74 "Ma ciò non ostante sacrificò il suo esterno all'ubbidienza, e conservò l'interno nella vera, e cristiana, mortificazione, ancorche Roma tripudiasse dappertutto; perche osservava in questa publica funzione, che il nostro Conte pareva rivestito d'una Maestà esteriore, degna della grandezza della sua nascita, e molto più degna della sua anima, per esser venuto alla Santa Fede con altro adornamento più nobile, e maestoso delle sue rare, ed eroiche virtù; di maniera che Roma conosceva nel nostro Conte un Senatore, che doveva per i suoi segnalatissimi meriti eternare il suo nome, lasciare in benedizione la sua memoria, e dare un nuovo lustro alla Dignità, che avevano occupata li suoi Antecessori; perche le sue gloriose gesta avrebbono perpetuato in detta Carica il suo gran Nome, ed avrebbono eternamente confuso sul Campidoglio i Luterani, ed altri Eretici inimici della soda, e vera gloria." *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 92–94.

use. The heroic entails an elevation to a divine state in which Bielke would “immortalize his name”, “leave in blessing his memory” and, finally, “confuse on the Capitol the Lutherans”. The theme of the apotheosis with which immortality is attained through heroic virtue has here a more markedly religious undertone than in the compositions written by the authors pertaining to Christina’s circle. Or, rather, the way in which it is expressed is devoid of the ancient references that were still present in the work of seventeenth-century authors. The contempt against the vanity of the world, and the anti-Protestant propaganda, are equally evident in the appraisals of both Swedish converts and so are also, albeit to a lesser extent, their statuses as royalty and nobility respectively, Bielke demonstrating his ancestry with “exterior Majesty”. The difference between the writings dedicated to Christina and those dedicated to Bielke appears to be more of degree than of sort. Bielke’s heroic virtue appears less political than that of Christina, which emerged in the context of her claims for legitimacy as sovereign queen in Rome. This aspect becomes clearer in a description of Bielke’s virtues and in particular of his “heroic strength”:

The strength of simply human virtues would have with no doubts surrendered [...] it could not have fought and won if the grace of Jesus Christ, which had already deliberately gained him to the abjure, had not given such courage and heroic strength which in fact, together with Christian magnanimity and internal consolation of the soul, led him to disdain everything for Christ and to make him walk ever intrepidly on the path of Evangelical truth.<sup>75</sup>

The function of the heroic appears here more concretely connected to the idea of sacrifice and disdain for the world that is central in the lives of the saints. It is by means of the “grace of Jesus Christ” that Bielke enhances his virtue and overcomes their common use. The heroic degree is thus attained through a divine intervention, according to the standpoints that had been stressed at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Lambertini, although these already had a long tradition.

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75 “La forza però delle virtù puramente umane avrebbe soccombuto senza dubbio [...] non avrebbe potuto vincere, e combattere rispettivamente, se la grazia di Gesù Cristo, che già gratuitamente l’aveva guadagnato all’abjura, non gli avesse dato tale, e tanto coraggio, e forza eroica, che di fatti con magnanimità Cristiana, e consolazione interna dello spirito, lo condusse a disprezzar tutto per Iddio, ed a farlo camminare sempre intrepidamente nel sentiero dell’Evangeliche verità.” *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 110.

A letter from Bielke to his wife from the middle of February 1737 proves however the exaggeration of the sentiments expressed in the *Memorie istoriche*. The newly elected senator conveys here all his satisfaction with the appointment given to him by the pope:

[...] it will suffice if I tell you that all the antique Senate of Rome is represented in the single person of the Senator of today. He enjoys the same Ceremonial of the Cardinals, and he is considered as the Pope of the People and of all the Secular. He is the first in rank after the Pope. Finally, my dearest, it is the hand of God that has worked for me.<sup>76</sup>

Bielke's stance that the senator would be "the Pope of the People"—in its turn exaggerated—is clearly aimed at showing to his wife the importance of the position attained.

The *Memorie istoriche* are thus characterized by the necessity, which apparently urges the author, to resolve the paradoxical relation between the fundamental contempt towards the vanity of worldly matters that a virtuous Christian life presupposes and the magnificence of Bielke's election. The author takes every opportunity to emphasize Bielke's disinterest and disdain for earthly matters. How all his actions were devoted to Catholic faith is finally condensed in a single phrase when the author explains that "all his actions until death were a continuous Holocaust and Sacrifice to the Lord".<sup>77</sup> The importance of the motive of Bielke's disdain for the vanities of life is evident in the different treatment given to this particular feature in the two biographies. Francesco dello Spirito Santo appears more nuanced on the topic in *Della vita e gesta*. One instance is when he recounts the episode of the preparations for Bielke's journey to Paris with his wife after their marriage:

In mutual agreement they then organized all the preparations necessary to the travel, in order to make in France that impression that suited them. They brought with them those silverware which were needed for their

76 "[...] il suffit guere de Vous dire que tout l'antique Senat de Rome est unit dans la seule personne du Senateur d'aujourd'huy. Il a le meme Ceremonial que M.ssrs les Cardinaux, et est regardé comme le Pape du Peuple, et de Seculis, il est la Premiere Personne apres le Pape. Enfin ma très chere c'est la main de Dieu qui a travaillé pour moy." Riksarkivet (Stockholm), Bergshamra samlingen, Nils Bielkes brev, 1730–1758, n. 8.

77 "tutte le sue azioni fin'alla morte furono un continuo Olocausto, e Sacrificio al Signore". *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 88.

service and those precious stones which were of highest value and they bought clothes of great beauty.<sup>78</sup>

The fact that there is no reference at all to this particular event in the *Memorie istoriche* is especially interesting, since Bielke's alleged vanity could invalidate the image of his exemplary life. The same strategy of downplaying all the events that might cast some shadow on Bielke's life and faith recurs through all the *Memorie istoriche*.

Another significant difference between the biographies is to be found in the depiction of Bielke's stay in Venice, after his departure from his wife, in which the author of the *Memorie istoriche* introduces the controversial episode of the father who was purported to have threatened the life of his own son by hiring two assassins to kill him:

The design of this Cross consisted of the fact that once the Ambassador had been reached by the news that the Father of our Count had sent two assassins to Venice in order to take his life, he suddenly warned him in order that he could leave, although he was not known in that town for who he really was, but he could have been recognized by the two above-mentioned Swedish assassins; [...]<sup>79</sup>

It is noteworthy how this particular event is compared to a 'cross' that Bielke has to bear as atonement. The episode, which is considered nonsense by Sigrid Leijonhufvud, is mitigated in *Della vita e gesta* where the two assassins are no longer connected to Bielke's father:

Here [in Venice] he stayed for a good while, until the same Count of Gergi, inspired by God, discovered that two assassins had been sent from faraway Countries in order to bereave Niccolò of his life for the only

78 "Di vicendevol consenso poi prepararono le cose necesarie al viaggio, e per far nella Francia quella figura, che lor conveniva, procurarono di seco portare quegli Argenti, che erano opportuni al loro servizio, e quelle preziose gemme, ch'erano di maggior valore, e si comprarono dei vestimenti di gran bellezza". *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke*, 14.

79 "L'apparecchio di questa Croce, fù, che pervenuta all'orecchio del suddetto Signore Ambasciatore [the French ambassador Count Gergi] la notizia, che il Padre del nostro Conte avea spedito in Venezia due Sicarj per togliergli la vita, gli diede l'impulso, che subito fugisse: poiche sebbene non fosse in quella Città conosciuto per quello ch'egli era, poteva esser cognito a suddetti Sicarj Svezesi; [...]". *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 65–66.



reason that he had abjured the errors of the Lutheran sect and publicly embraced the truth of the Catholic Faith.<sup>80</sup>

However it might have transpired with these two, unlikely, assassins threatening Bielke's life, this episode stands out as clearly introduced in both biographies in order to promote the theme of the Protestant persecution of the Swedish convert. The theme of the persecution due to faith is widely employed in the life of saints, especially in the case of martyrs. A last comparison between the two biographies will show how another important episode of supernatural character is treated with slight differences. In this Bielke, before his arrival to Venice, is cured in Augsburg of a pain in his arm by the intercession of the Virgin Mary when he prays to her. The anonymous author recounts this event with these words:

Inspired by God he turned to the intercession of a Holy Image of the Holy Virgin Mary, which is venerated in that City [Augsburg], and the following night the Mother of God appeared to him in a dream, touched his side and arm, where the pain was acute and insufferable, and suddenly he was cured.<sup>81</sup>

The remedy of Bielke's pain in the arm is the work of the Virgin Mary who appears to the Swedish count in his dream. The description of the same episode in *Della vita e gesta*, though referring explicitly to the 'unheard miracles' of which the Holy Image is capable of is more cautious in its expressions:

In Augsburg is conserved a certain Image of the Holy Virgin Mary which is devoutly venerated because of all the unheard miracles and graces it has interceded. To this Mother of graces recommended he [Bielke] his soul and life, praying her that she would re-establish him in his former

80 "Qui [in Venice] dimorò alquanto tempo, finchè il Conte stesso di Gergì, ispirato internamente da Dio, scoprì due Sicarj spediti da lontani Paesi, affinché togliessero di vita Niccolò per la sola ragione, che solamente abjurati gli errori della setta Luterana, pubblicamente e con verità aveva abbracciato la Cattolica Fede." *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke*, 24.

81 "Inspirato egli da Dio, ricorse all'intercessione d'una Santa Immagine di Maria Santissima, che si venera con molta divozione in quella Città; e la notte seguente le comparve in sogno la Madre di Dio, gli toccò il fianco, e braccio, ove il dolore era più acuto, ed insoffribile, ed istantaneamente restò guarito." *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 47.

health. Although he had not yet abjured, as he wished, with a legal act Luther's Sect, for what he affirmed, it seemed to him in a dream that this Mother of piety and mercy had with her hand touched suavely his arm, and all his side and therefore, removing his pain, re-established him to his health.<sup>82</sup>

A decisive difference between these two descriptions lies in that "gli era sembrato in sogno" (it seemed to him in a dream), which considerably nuances the assertion of a divine intervention.

In summary, it stands clear that all the episodes that seem controversial in the *Memorie istoriche* are sensibly downplayed in *Della vita e gesta*. It is likely that Francesco dello Spirito Santo felt the urge to revise the exaggerations of the first biography of which, as I argued before, he had probably inspired the content but not the way it is presented. In other words, the message conveyed in the *Memorie istoriche* might have appeared too close in its formulations to hagiographic literature.

To what extent the *Memorie istoriche* was written for a possible future canonization process for Bielke is, as mentioned several times before, impossible to ascertain. Nonetheless it is, finally, interesting to note how Bielke's path towards conversion is twice compared to a "saintly action" in the end of the *Memorie istoriche*. In the first instance, the senator is praised for his "Santo uso della sua Ipocondria, ed altre Infermità corporali" (Saintly use of his Hypochondria and other corporeal Infirmities), while in the funeral procession leading his corpse to St Birgitta's church, Bielke is compared to a *gran Santo* (great Saint) with these words:

He [Bielke] was carried in the evening at about one o'clock from the Capitol to the Church of St Birgitta in Piazza Farnese. A multitude of People started to gather from the Capitol and the Church Jesuits walking to that named Church [of Saint Birgitta] that it seemed as it was the

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82 "Si conserva in Augusta una certa Immagine della Beatissima Vergine Maria, la quale a cagione degli inauditi miracoli e grazie con somma divozione è venerata. A questa Madre di grazie raccomandò l'anima sua e la sua vita, pregandola, se così le piacesse, a degnarsi di restituirlgli la sua primiera salute; e benché non avesse ancora abjurato come desiderava, la Setta di Lutero con un'atto legale, contuttociò, per quanto affermava, gli era sembrato in sogno, che questa Madre di pietà e di misericordia gli avesse colla mano toccato soavemente il braccio, e tutto il fianco, cosicchè tolto il dolore, l'avesse perfettamente ristabilito in salute." *Della vita e gesta di Niccolò Bielke*, 18.

transportation of a great Saint, witnessing of the esteem, and respect, that the people had for him; [...]<sup>83</sup>

This last statement finds an unexpected echo in the travel account of Swedish orientalist Jakob Jonas Björnsthål, who only two years later, in 1771, wrote from Rome about the great esteem in which Senator Bielke was still held by the Roman people:

About Count *Bielke*, Senateur de Rome, everyone here speaks well. He is so generally missed and widely known over the all City, by high and low persons, elder and younger, that I have never seen anything like this. They speak about him with tears in their eyes and they whisper for his decease.<sup>84</sup>

Without being too sceptical about Björnsthål's affirmation, it is noteworthy that the *Memorie istoriche* seems to have attained its goal of propagating a virtuous image of Bielke.

To conclude, the expressions of heroic virtue I have considered in relation to Queen Christina and Senator Bielke are imbued with the theological discussions on canonization procedures developed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Heroism, and overcoming human limitations to approximate the divine, acts in both contexts in conjunction with the affirmation of free will in opposition to Protestant theology. Nonetheless, the traditional argument of a necessary contempt for the vanity of the world stands in contrast to this stance and the humanistic strain that presupposes it. As converts to Catholicism, Christina and Bielke stand at a crossroad in the debate of the period after the formalization of canonization procedures. Their positions are slightly different: Christina's heroic character is associated with her claims for legitimacy as sovereign queen in Rome to such an extent that the political aspect tends to overshadow the religious aspect, though they are specular and

83 "Alla sera verso un'ora di notte, fù trasportato dal Campidoglio alla Chiesa di S. Brigida in Piazza Farnese, dove s'era lasciato. Cominciò la calca dell'affollato Popolo dal Campidoglio verso il Gesù a detta Chiesa, che pareva che fosse qualche trasporto di un gran Santo, non protestando altro, che la stima, e rispetto, che ne aveva conceputo; [...]". *Memorie istoriche della vita del Conte Niccolò De Bielke*, 146–147.

84 "Om Grefve *Bielke*, Senateur de Rome, tala alla människor härstädes väl: han är så almänt saknad, och så almänt berömd öfver hela Staden; af höga och låga, af små och stora, at jag icke vet mig hört maken: de tala om honom med tårar i ögonen, och sucka öfver hans mistning." Jacob Jonas Björnsthål, *Resa til Frankrike, Italien, Sweitz, Tyskland, Holland, England, Turkiet, och Grekland* (Stockholm, 1780–1784), 179.

presuppose each other; Bielke's character, on the other hand, appears more clearly directed to serve the cause of Catholic propaganda.

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*The Theory and Practice of Heroic Virtue in Early  
Modern Sweden*





# The King's Virtues in Swedish Mirrors for Princes

## c. 1300–c. 1600

Tania Preste

“All the honest people admire your excellent and constant piety, which stands out as the sweetest among the existing heroic virtues, [and] is already known on Earth and praised as a heavenly model,”<sup>1</sup> Johannes Matthiae wrote in 1655, in a letter<sup>2</sup> to his former pupil Queen Christina of Sweden (1626–1689), who had publicly abjured Protestantism and converted to Catholicism a few months earlier. In this context, and in connection with Christina in particular, the reference to her heroic virtues is very problematic indeed. This difficulty is increased by the use of the plural: we must not forget, of course, that this is the name given to the group of virtues that bestowed, through the processes of canonization, the title ‘venerable’.<sup>3</sup> The text of the letter itself is ambiguous and needs to be addressed rather delicately: if, in the first part,<sup>4</sup> the recent decision of the former pupil is censured, because apostasy is the worst error, Matthiae’s vision and ecumenical hope prevail in the second part of the letter.<sup>5</sup>

To understand the questions raised by this letter, it is necessary to investigate why this expression is used. Is it a reference to the conversion of the former queen or does it allude to her royalty and to the honour of her lineage?

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1 “Omnes boni singularem tuam pietatem ac suavissimam heroicarum virtutum harmonicam, orbi iam notam et coelorum Magnatum exemplum decantatam admirantur”, Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), Johannes Matthiae to Queen Christina, 9 December 1655. Engström B 1 2, 12, fol. 253r.

2 Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), Johannes Matthiae to Queen Christina, 9 December 1655. Engström B 1 2, 12, fols. 251v–254r.

3 Romeo De Maio, “L’ideale eroico nei processi di canonizzazione della controriforma,” *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, 11 (1972): 139–160; Angelo Turchini, *La fabbrica del Santo: il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma* (Casal Monferrato: Marietti, 1984); Marina Caffiero, “Tra modelli di disciplinamento e autonomia soggettiva,” in *Modelli di santità e modelli di comportamento*, Giulia Barone, Marina Caffiero, Francesco Scorza Barcellona (eds.), (Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1994), 265–81.

4 Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), Johannes Matthiae to Queen Christina, 9 December 1655. Engström B 1 2, 12, fols. 251v–252r.

5 Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), Johannes Matthiae to Queen Christina, 9 December 1655. Engström B 1 2, 12, fols. 253v–254r.

Is it typical of its time or is it possibly linked to the geographical location of the writer, that is, the kingdom of Sweden?

The aim of this chapter is to trace and explain the presence of the idea of *virtus heroica* in this particular geographical context, by analysing a specific genre of political literature that is dedicated to the education of sovereigns: the *specula principum*.<sup>6</sup> The time framework for this chapter—the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries—is determined by the existence of texts corresponding to the main characteristics of this genre and the date of Christina's letter.

The choice of Sweden is dictated by two reasons: one of a practical nature, and another of a more theoretical nature. First, the Swedish context has the practical advantage of presenting a manageable body of literary works such as to render possible a glance (however rapid) at the texts produced during various centuries. Second, concerning as it does a country, which for both historical and geographical reasons could be called peripheral,<sup>7</sup> it may be seen as an

6 Mirrors of princes are real and actual manuals containing both prescriptions for the moral and political education of the sovereigns and practical recommendations on the exercise of power. The problem of the definition arises from the heterogeneity of the literary genres that may contain these prescriptions: books, letters, notes to the classics, et cetera. See Angela De Benedictis (ed.), *Specula principum*, Ius Commune, Sonderheft, 117 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1999); *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid från vikingatid till reformationstid*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger 1980–1982), s.v. “kongespeillitteratur”.

7 “Concepts of centre and periphery have acquired a fundamental importance in the humanities and social sciences. The use of this binary scheme of centre and periphery has exercised a prescriptive function in the development of knowledge disciplines highlighting prime factors in social organization, in the cultural sphere, in political interests, and in institutional factors. In this scheme of things, the centres defined typological standards in which ‘residual,’ ‘dissonant,’ ‘heterogeneous,’ ‘delocalized’ experiences would be defined as peripheral.” Paolo Capuzzo, “Nuove dimensioni del rapporto centro-periferia: appunti per un dossier,” *Storicamente*, 2 (2006): doi: 10.1473/stor379. However, the dichotomy centre/periphery has been mostly adopted in contexts of economic history and the study of less privileged social groups—“women, children, slaves, blacks or more simply heretics, peasants, workers” (Enciclopedia Treccani, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/storiografia-res-f775bbdf-87egd-00116357eee51%28Enciclopedia-Italiana%29/>)—and more recently in postcolonial studies, where there are examples in which these categories can be profitably used in a more generic historiographical context. See Paolo Capuzzo and Chiara Giorgi (eds.), *Centro e periferia come categorie storiografiche. Esperienze di ricerca in Italia, Spagna e Portogallo*, Quaderni del Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche—Università di Bologna 11 (Roma: Carocci, 2009); “Centri e periferie. Forme e modelli attraverso la storia,” *Storicamente*, 2 (2006): doi:10.12977/stor534. It should be stressed that, as postcolonial studies demonstrate, the relationship is never a linear or unidirectional one: the production of knowledge and ideas is always polycentric and multidirectional. The studies shown here concur with the notion that the binary and hierarchical structures have been superseded. Capuzzo, “Nuove

ideal observation post to examine the reception, and diffusion of a key concept that was gradually becoming dominant in political discourse on the European continent.

It may also be useful to extend the analysis to a few texts addressed to the young members of the ruling class to allow us to establish whether the idea of heroic virtue is always connected with royalty, either political or spiritual, or whether it can also be attributed to other social categories.

The first text in chronological order is *Um styrilsi kununga och hofdinga* (hereafter *Konungastyrelsen*), the date and author of which is unknown.<sup>8</sup> It is also not clear to whom the *speculum* is addressed: if some scholars recognize the addressee as Magnus IV of Sweden (1316–1374), others claim it was more likely addressed to his sons Erik (1339–1359), and Håkan (1340–1380).<sup>9</sup> As regards dating, this has always been a matter of controversy: given its references to *De regimine principum* of Giles of Rome,<sup>10</sup> it cannot be dated before

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dimensioni del rapporto centro-periferia". This manifests an efficacy in so far as it allows us to investigate the multiplicity of relationships and complexity of the circulation of ideas. In our case, it reveals how a certain idea profitably employed in a specific historical context is transformed into something different in a peripheral context. As Capuzzo states, "[o]ne needs nevertheless to make clear the epistemological presupposition which attributes heuristic centrality to the peripheries, that is to say, that the context in which one sets up a methodology should be one in which there are reciprocal relations involving the periphery in the consciousness of the centre and vice versa." Capuzzo, "Nuove dimensioni del rapporto centro-periferia".

- 8 In 1634, Johannes Bureus made the first printed version of *Konungastyrelsen* from a medieval manuscript in Johan Skytte's library. In 1669, when Johannes Schefferus edited his Latin translation, the manuscript was lost. Schefferus wrote, in the introduction, that some people suggested the text was a fake made by Bureus with the involvement of Gustavus Adolphus and Johan Skytte. The discussion continued until 1867 when two parchment blades of *Konungastyrelsen* were found in Finland. Lennart Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen. En filologisk undersökning*, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet, 69:2 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1984): 14–15.
- 9 Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*; Leif Dannert, "Konungastyrelsens politiska åskådning och skriftens datering," *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 23 (1938), 43–60; Michael Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid. Norden under Magnus Ericsson 1317–1374* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1997), 137–55; Kristin Drar, *Konungens herravälde såsom rättvisans, fridens och frihetens beskydd: medeltidens fursteideal i svenskt hög- och senmedeltida källmaterial*, Acta Universitatis Lundensis, sectio I, Theologica juridica Humaniora, 33 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1980), 69–93. The quotations from the text are taken from the first printed edition of Bureus, 1634 (Lennart Moberg, ed., *En nyttigh bok|om Konnunga Styrilse och höfdinga. Johannes Bureus utgåva*, Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet 69:1 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1964) (hereafter cited as *En nyttigh bok*).
- 10 On *De regimine principum* of Giles of Rome, see Biörn Tjällén's article in this volume.

the year 1270, whereas the final date of composition has been a long-debated issue among philologists and historians. Most recently, the *Konungastyrelsen* has been dated to the years between 1330 and 1350.<sup>11</sup>

Written for the education of Philip IV of France around 1270, the work of Giles of Rome is, more or less explicitly, the main source for our author, although the *Konungastyrelsen* cannot be considered a translation in any way.<sup>12</sup> The organization of the text into four codes (*balker*), borrowing the term from Swedish legal discourse and from customary local laws, seems to suggest a willingness to create a continuity with the early literary tradition of the country.<sup>13</sup> Neither do scholars concur about the main thesis that inspired the text. For many scholars, the text argues in favour of royal absolutism (or of the *regimen regale* to use the language of that period), in the spirit of the text of Giles of Rome, and by virtue of this fact seemingly promotes hereditary monarchy. On the other hand, it is argued that while supporting hereditary monarchy for matters of internal peace, it would rather support the *regimen politicum*.<sup>14</sup>

The Swedish text is rather faithful to *De regimine principum*, especially to its structure. The first *balk* describes the differences between monarchy and oligarchy, between hereditary and elective office, demonstrating a clear position in favour of the hereditary monarchy, but with the right of the governed to dismiss the king should he reveal himself to be a tyrant. In the *De regimine principum* and, more generally in the political thought of Giles of Rome, the rebellion against a tyrant has no legitimacy, whereas in the Swedish text, not only is it allowed, but also willed by God.<sup>15</sup> The discussion about the type of monarchy is, as already mentioned, rather controversial because in this respect the text seems in clear contrast with the land law of Magnus Eriksson (1347),

11 Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*, 56–107; Hans H. Ronge, “Om Konungastyrelsen,” *Arkiv för Nordisk Filologi*, 101 (1986), 211–29 (221–23).

12 Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*, 87; Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 139.

13 Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*, 11. Although is not clear if this way of organizing the text was made by the author or by Bureus, but there are elements that encourage the first option (Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*, 116).

14 Dannert, “Konungastyrelsens politiska åskådning och skriftens datering,” 44–56. On the *regimen politicum* and on the *regale* albeit in the modern era with its focus on the relationship between parliaments and the power of the monarch, see Helmut Georg Koeningsberger, “Monarchies and Parliaments in Early Modern Europe: Dominium Regale or Dominium Politicum et Regale,” *Theory and Society*, 5, no. 2 (March 1978), 191–217 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/656696>), in which the Swedish constitutional settlement is analysed p. 213; Angela De Benedictis, *Politica, governo e istituzioni nell'Europa moderna*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), 287–95.

15 Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 146.



which, on the contrary, refers explicitly to the election of the king. Moreover, the emphasis in *Konungastyrelsen* on the importance of worthy advisors for the king, with whom he must make decisions for the well being of the kingdom, resonates with the words of the *landslag*, according to which the king governs “with the counsel of the council”.<sup>16</sup> The *Konungastyrelse* begins with this matter, starting from the origin of the word *konung* (king): “The king is named after his family, because there should never be a king not coming from a good family, and therefore one is king according to birth and heredity, the son after the father and the father after his parents.”<sup>17</sup>

The second part deals with how the behaviour of the sovereign must be based on virtue and honour. The sovereign is characterized by the key concept of *rex semideus*, although this comes from possessing the cardinal virtues to a greater extent than any other man and not from a specific virtue. This position does not accord with that of Giles of Rome who, in his *De regimine principum*, underlines the necessity for the king to have that *quid* (that is, heroic virtue) that sets him apart from all other men: a specific and separate virtue that gives him almost godlike qualities.<sup>18</sup> In the Swedish text, the idea of the sovereign's higher virtue is repeated several times, together with the king's duty to ensure freedom, peace and harmony among his subjects.

We find here expressions emphasizing how the king is manlier than others. He has more power than other men and therefore he must be more virtuous: “Now, as previously said, the kings and the chiefs are not only men, but they are also something more than other men and are like gods in this house. For this reason, people reserve to them honour, faith, obedience and reverence. And therefore they must live and be more virtuous and more godlike than any other men, so that people can look at them and admire their behaviour,”<sup>19</sup> writes the anonymous author of the text, before reminding the reader of these essential virtues for a sovereign. First of all, there are the theological virtues: *hop* (hope), *tro* (faith), and *kärlek* (charity). But, in order to be a good sovereign, cardinal

16 “Med råds råde”. Cf. Nordberg, *I kung Magnus tid*, 147.

17 “Kunungär hauär nampn aff kyni sino| at äy må kunungär vtan af godho kyni komin wara| ok thy skal kunungär wara äpte byrd ok ar| som äpte fadher ok föräldre sina.”. *En nyttigh bok*, 6.

18 This particular aspect of the question is thoroughly investigated by Biörn Tjällén in the aforementioned chapter in this volume.

19 “Nu| som för är sakt| kununga ok höfdinga the äru ey at enast män| vtan the äru ok än nokot mera än andre män| ok suåsom nokor gudh iui almogha i thenna hem| I ty gör almoghen thöm hedher ok tienist lydhno ok wirdning. Ok ty skulu the liua ok wara dyghdelikare ok gudhlikare än huarn annor man| Ty at almoghen se ok skudha ok vndra thera äthäue.” *En nyttigh bok*, 39.

virtues are necessary: *forhuxan* (*prudentia*), *starklek* (*fortitudo*), *hofsämi* (*temperantia*), and *rättvisa* (*iustitia*). It is prudence alone that earns him the title of king, the absence of which makes him unsuitable for government. The sovereign must possess virtues to a greater extent than any other man, because he must always consider himself more than a man, being the one who, more than anybody else, “is more than a man and can bring to mind God on Earth”.<sup>20</sup> And, because he has a greater power than other men, he must be more faithful to God and more virtuous and virile in comparison. However, as is clear from the *incipit*, these virtues are in no way different from those of other mortals: “And of all virtues, four are the main virtues, and those who do not possess them, as a wise master says, have no virtue at all.”<sup>21</sup> The author adds a fifth virtue, which is useful for a just and content kingdom: *mildleker* (mercy); “because the kings and the chiefs who are not merciful towards their own properties and their own money, never receive the full love of or a good reputation from their own subjects.”<sup>22</sup>

The third book explains how to govern one’s own men and court and also focuses on the education of heirs. If, on the one hand, great stress is laid upon the importance of moral education, on the other hand, the use of athletic training and war games is underlined. Indeed, the good recommendations on how to manage and administer the house, the court and the kingdom intertwine with the ethical recommendations enabling the young sovereign to be suitable for his task.

Finally, the fourth book explains how, by means of the right laws and of wise and reliable advisers, one’s own country and people can be governed with praise and honour in peace, freedom and without internal strife.<sup>23</sup>

The text is clearly in favour of the monarchy, preferably hereditary monarchy, depending on the individual gifts of the heir to the throne. These individual gifts are presented as innate and deriving from one’s own family membership, and we have seen what the author said about the origin of the word *kung*. On the other hand, these virtues must be enhanced through education thus

20 “Är ok mera än man ok minna än Guth i thesse werld.” *En nyttigh bok*, 14.

21 “Ok af allom dyghdom tå äru fira the sum äru howudh dyghde| ok hua som ey hauer thöm| sua sum wise mästara säghia| thå hauer han änga dyghd fulkumlika.” *En nyttigh bok*, 18.

22 “Ty at huilkin kunungur ella höfdinge ey är mildr af godz ok penningom sinom| Han få aldrei fullan kärlek ella godha fräghd| af sinom undidånom.” *En nyttigh bok*, 34.

23 This last expression often recurs throughout the entire text as a sort of ‘mantra’ indicating the ultimate aims of good governance. Moberg spots “peace and freedom and harmony” (“frith ok frælsi ok sæmiu inbyrthis”) nineteen times (Moberg, *Konungastyrelsen*, 113).

explaining the great importance placed on the choice of the educator in the third book, and the emphasis on teaching from an ethical point of view. In line with the text of Giles of Rome, we find however the idea that the sovereign is, to a certain extent, chosen by God, who provides him with a greater quality of virtue. In summary, therefore, the virtues of a sovereign in the *Konungastyrelse* stem both from his birth and from his individual predisposition as well as from his education, although they are the same virtues that each man must possess to be worthy of this name and the difference lies in the quality of the virtue. Because the power of a sovereign is greater than that of his subjects, his virtue and humanity (virility) must be greater.

*Konungastyrelsen* is matched by a text that, although not a mirror for princes in a formal sense, is such from the point of view of its content: it is the eighth book of the revelations of Birgitta of Sweden (b. 1303–d. 1373) in which she addresses the temporal sovereigns on behalf of the celestial emperor, and in doing so depicts her ideal king (*Liber celestis Imperatoris ad reges*).<sup>24</sup> The main virtue of a sovereign must be his ability to choose his advisers among straight and honest people, who should not be guided by avidity or personal interest. He must obviously live as a good Christian, attending religious services every day and observing fasts, but without impeding in any way the administration of justice. He must be generous with the poor and charitable, he must administer justice on a weekly basis and always perform it conscientiously. He must never introduce laws that are in contrast with God's law or that violate the laws

24 Drar, *Konungens herravälde såsom rättvisans, fridens och frihetens beskydd*, 94–98. Drar suggest this juxtaposition, because the period and the context in which the two texts are written (the court, the Swedish noble environments around the middle of the fourteenth century) are the same. Furthermore, by illustrating her image of an ideal sovereign, Birgitta gives clear indications on what a royal sovereign should be. For the relationship between the king and Birgitta, see Birgit Klockars, *Birgittas svenska värld* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1976), 118–33, 163–70; Hans Furuhausen, *Furstinnan av Närke som blev Heliga Birgitta* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1990), 128–45; John H. Lind, "Magnus Eriksson som birgitinsk konge i lyset af russiske kilder," in *Birgitta, hendes vaerk og hendes klostre i Norden*, Tore Nyberg (ed.), (Odense: Odense Univ. Forlag 1991); Birger Bergh, *Heliga Birgitta: Ättabarnsmor och profet*. (Lund: Historiska media, 2002), 109–113; Tore Nyberg, "Birgitta politikern," in *Birgitta av Vadstena: Pilgrim och profet 1303–1373: En jubileumsbok*, Per Beskow and Annette Landen (eds.), (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2003), 89–104. Also of interest is how the text becomes a condemnation of the king where the virtues of the ideal sovereign are manifested as being in opposition to the vices of the actual sovereign (Magnus Eriksson). See Olle Ferm, *Olaus Petri och Heliga Birgitta: Synpunkter på ett nytt sätt att skriva historia i 1500-talets Sverige* (Stockholm: Sällskapet Runica et Mediaevalia, 2007), 13–18.

and customs of the kingdom. Therefore, the virtues that the sovereign must absolutely possess are, once again, *iustitia* and *prudentia*, although clemency and mercy play a key role in Birgitta's political revelations.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of manifold differences, this revelation and the *Konungastyrelse* contain a few important common denominators. First of all, while supporting hereditary monarchy, the *Konungastyrelse* too once again considers the choice of the correct advisers for the sovereign to consult and listen to; they are essential for good governance (understood as that which is advantageous to the people). Secondly, the fundamental virtues are identified, which are, as has been said, justice and prudence. And, finally, the reason itself for writing the text is presented: the belief in the possibility to invoke and incite others to follow the virtues and behaviour befitting a sovereign.

Two hundred years later, around 1520, Peder Månsson (d. 1534) summarizes and adapts the much more renowned *Institutio principis christiani* (1516) of Erasmus of Rotterdam with the title of *Barnabok* to the Swedish historical and political context, hence immediately underlining the major political difference between the two texts: the Erasmian text was conceived of and written for a prince, whereas Peder Månsson has the children of the Swedish aristocracy in mind.<sup>26</sup>

This difference is clearly explained by the author, in order to justify the reasons for his translation: if the children of the people (*almoge*) have someone to educate them and correct them when they err, this does not happen to the young princes, nor to the children of the nobles, who are used to being fawned over. The book is therefore translated not for the son of a sovereign, but for "all the well-born Swedish citizens,"<sup>27</sup> explaining that, since the kingdom is not a hereditary monarchy, all those who are worthy by birth or by virtue, with the grace of God, may become sovereigns.<sup>28</sup> As in the two previous *specula*, the ideals of virtue that should characterize a prince can be strengthened and

25 *Den heliga Birgitta himmelska uppenbarleser*, trans. Tryggve Lundén, 4 vols (Malmö: Allhems förlag 1957–1959), 3:253–335. See Hans Aili, "Handskrifterna till Birgittas revelationer," in *Birgitta av Vadstena*, Per Beskow and Annette Landen (eds.), 53–72.

26 See Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1975), 181–86, 190–91; *Kulturhistoriskt lexikon för nordisk medeltid från vikingatid till reformationstid*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1980–1982), s.v. "Peder Månsson, skrifter".

27 "Allom welby[r]digom Swerigis Inbyggjarom", Peder Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, Robert Geete (ed.), Samlingar utgifna af Svenska Fornsskrift-Sällskapet (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1913–15), 657.

28 "Huru theres barn skola läras och upfödas ty alla the ähre empne aff huilkom iw någor effter gudz försynn welies thill konungh ty Swerige är ejj ärfue rijcke", Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 657–58.

inspired through education and good examples: indeed, such virtues need a guide to reveal and manifest themselves and only when this happens, is a man worthy of wearing the regalia. Further, each of them is made to remind the sovereign of a virtue that the sovereign must possess:

if a king or a prince has nobody who spurs him towards virtue, then he must think that his ornaments invite and oblige him towards virtue. Who cares if the king is anointed, without mercy, [...], what does gold indicate without great wisdom, what do the pearls mean without bright virtue, what are the purple robes without the burning love for the common good, what does the sceptre mean without inflexible justice, but if the sovereign does not have these virtues, these objects do not adorn him, but more likely they punish him, because they are not fitting.<sup>29</sup>

In a similar vein to the anonymous author of *Konungastyrelsen*, Månsson repeats several times what the indispensable virtues are and, once again, underlines the great necessity for the sovereign to possess *prudentia*, and, at the same time, to be “the image of a living God”<sup>30</sup> thanks to his sense of justice, his prudence and his capacity to administer such justice not to his own advantage, because “as nothing is superior to God, so the actions and the ways of a king must be superior to the actions of all other people.”<sup>31</sup>

The author emphasizes that virtue has always been the basis of royal power and he almost seems to paraphrase Aristotle when he states that, among the preceptors, no sovereign was ever chosen who was not so virtuous in all his actions as to appear godlike:<sup>32</sup> “because it is typical of the king to think about himself as so virtuous as to be compared to a god, or of the nature of the

29 “Haffuer en herre och konungh ingen then honum maner thill dygd, thå skulle han tenckia att han prydelssse honum mana och kräffuia till dygdh. Huar merker konungen smörs, vthan blidhett, och säfflatigheet, huadh teckner gull, vthen storen wijsdom, huadh merckia perlor, vthen skinande dygdh, huadh purpur klädher, vthen brinnande kärlek thill alment bästa, huadh will spiran, vthan oböyelige rätwisso, men haffuer konungen ey the dygderna, thå prydhya ey the tingen honum vthen mehre straffe än thå honum ingen tiltaler.” Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 666.

30 “Ett leffuandes gudz lickenisse”, Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 670.

31 “Inthett är högre ähn gudh så skall och konungens hogh och gerninger yppere warae öffwer alla andra meniskiors gerninger”, Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 670.

32 “Aff vphöffwerne waldes inga till konunger vthen the ssom wåre så dygdelige i alle sine gerningar, som the hade waritt gudhar”, Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 677. Here the Erasmian texts refers not to the preceptors, but to the common popular agreement that names the sovereigns on the basis of their heroism, which makes them similar to gods.

most noble people who may be compared to God.”<sup>33</sup> If he does not possess these virtues, the consequence is that a sovereign should abdicate. The prince who accepts this condition must therefore conform to the image of the ideal sovereign that Månsson (in the same way as Erasmus and following his text almost literally)<sup>34</sup> creates in contrast to the tyrant, and in which the choice of the advisers, who must themselves be wiser than the rest of the population, is fundamental.<sup>35</sup>

The idea of the sovereign, not as a special individual provided with separate virtues, but as a man who possesses and acts using the same virtues to a greater extent than others, is once again suggested. Although these virtues are to some extent linked to birth, Månsson's foreword underlines the importance of education and of the *exempla* in allowing the subject to be aware of his virtues and how they are manifested.

Johan Skytte (1577–1645),<sup>36</sup> Gustavus Adolphus's teacher, put *Een kort onderwijsning uthi huad konster och dygder een fursteligh person skall sikh öfwe och bruke then ther tencker medh tijdhen lyckosalighen regere land och rijke* into print in 1604.<sup>37</sup> Written in a political context in which, after fratricidal strife, the Vasa royal family strongly held the reins of the monarchy in their hands (hence also becoming hereditary from a formal point of view), the text, as Skytte himself informs us, contains prescriptions on how a prince should be educated to become a good Christian. It indicates the princely virtues and actions that he

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Cf. *Collected works of Erasmus. Literary and educational writings*, A.H.T. Levi (ed.), (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 5: 231.

- 33 “Ty tillhör konungen innerlige tänckia sikh skole så dygdelige ware så att han wore lijknadh widh gudh, eller thet förnemste meniskiors natur ssom kann och förmechtar lijcknas widh gudh”, Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 677.
- 34 *Collected works of Erasmus*, 5: 223–32.
- 35 Månsson, *Skrifter på svenska*, 671–76. See Ingvar Andersson, “Tyrannbegreppet under medeltid och renässans från Augustinus till Machiavelli. En studie i svensk och medeltids-litteratur”, in *Lychnos* (1943), 111–28.
- 36 See Tor Berg, *Johan Skytte. Hans ungdom och verksamhet under Karl IX: s regering* (Stockholm: Albert Bonnier, 1920); Erland Sellberg, “Vår förste utbildningspolitiker. En viktig del av Johan Skyttes politiska insats” in *1600-talets ansikte*, Sten Åke Nilsson et al. (eds.), *Symposier på Krapperups borg* 3 (Lund: Gyllenstiernska Krapperupstiftelsen, 1997), 323–43.
- 37 Johan Skytte, “Een kort Onderwijsning Uthi Huad Konster och Dygder Een Fursteligh Person skall sikh öfwe och bruke then ther tencker medh tijdhen lyckosalighen regere Land och Rijke,” in *Reformpedagogik i Gustav Adolfs anda*, Bror Rudolf Hall (ed.), *Årsböcker i Svensk Undervisningshistoria*, 33 (Lund: Gleerups, 1932), 35–58. See Nils Runeby, “*Monarchia Mixta*: Maktfördelningsdebatt i Sverige under den tidigare stormakts-tiden, *Studia Historica Upsaliensia* VI (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1962), 47–52.

should acquire and follow in order not to harm his subjects, but to be instead a strength and a comfort to them.<sup>38</sup> These virtues are of the utmost importance for a prince. How can he avoid the contempt of his subjects “if, when he takes on his role as sovereign, he is not gifted and decorated with any of these royal virtues?”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, “when the subjects know that their regent is gifted with all the princely virtues of wisdom and understanding, they are in line with him and are found attentive and obedient in all the appropriate things.”<sup>40</sup> But what are the *kungliga* (royal) and *furstliga* (princely) virtues described by Skytte? Are they something separate, belonging only to a hereditary king or prince or, as in the previous literature, or are they common virtues that they simply possess to a greater extent than other men?

Skytte indicates the virtues that a sovereign should possess and the feelings that must inspire him: he should be gentle, pious, keen on peace, and devoted to the general good, wise, reasonable, virile, brave, fair and honest. Once again, virtues, and feelings deriving from the cardinal virtues are of fundamental importance, and once more the idea is that they can be learned, and brought to light by the right education and by means of an adequate study programme.

*Hortus Regius* by Schering Rosenhane (1609–1663) is a manuscript (1646), dedicated to Queen Christina of Sweden. Although it is basically a celebrative work of the coming of age and of the first year of the reign of the young queen,<sup>41</sup> because of its *raison d'être*, which lies in its examples of political education and virtue, it can be included among the *specula*.<sup>42</sup> This type of work

38 “Huru en furste må j sin ungdoms tijdh blifwe Christligen och wäl optuchtat| och uthi alle Furstilige dygder och gerninger så öfwat| at han medh tijden| icke är sine undersåter meer tils skadhe| än til styrke och troligit bijstånd”, Skytte, “Een kort Onderwijsning,” 36.

39 “När han träder in uthi sitt Konungzlige embethe och är medh inge Konungzlige dygder beprydd och begåfwat?” Skytte, “Een kort Onderwijsning,” 37.

40 “När undersåtherne wetta at theas Regent är medh alle Furstilge dyghder medh wijsdom, medh förstånd märkligen begåfwat äre the wäl tilfridz medh honom och låthe sigh vthi alle tilbörliche saker hörighe och lydige finna”, Skytte, “Een kort Onderwijsning,” 37–38.

41 Stina Hansson, “Efterskrift”, in Schering Rosenhane, *“Hortus Regius”: En kunglig trädgård*, Stina Hansson (ed.), Lychnos-Bibliotek 30 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1978), 186–89. See Allan Ellenius, “Schering Rosenhane och det emblematiske språket,” in *Lychnos* (1997), 81–102; C.M.S., “Schering Rosenhanes ‘Hortus Regius’”, in *Personhistorisk tidskrift*, XI (1909), 119–23. For emblems in a Swedish context, see Allan Ellenius, “Om emblematiske roll i 1600-talets samhälle,” in *Mimesis förvandlingar: Tradition och förnyelse i renässansens och barockens litteratur*, Hans-Erik Johannesson (ed.), (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002), 74–77; Allan Ellenius, “Johannes Schefferus, Kristina Minerva och Fortuna Audax: En studie i politisk emblematik,” *Lychnos* (1954–55), 165–95.

42 Hansson, “Efterskrift”, 156.



can rightly be inserted among the didactic and pedagogic tradition for nobles and princes, and matched with the *specula* as well as the moral and political treatises dedicated to young sovereigns: the political emblems have the same pedagogic ambitions as the above-mentioned genres.

The book is divided into two parts. The first contains eighteen emblems, and the adages and quotations related to each emblem and, breaking up the emblems, the nine genealogical trees that illustrate and celebrate the noble origins of the sovereign. The second part is a review of the European royal families at the time the book was written.

The dedication to the queen offers a different interpretation of the origin of the virtue, as our author writes, “the major stimulus to the virtue is to be born from noble blood”<sup>43</sup> and, shortly afterwards, the idea that birth determines virtue is confirmed: “But great strength is in the blood and from the family shines the glory of virtue.”<sup>44</sup>

In the previous texts, although related to lineage, virtue was not defined as innate but instead should be learned and fostered through education and the study of the *exempla*, while for Rosenhane, birth itself strengthens actions and makes them more virtuous. He refers to the work of Aegidius Girs who maintains, in a pamphlet on authentic nobility, that the virtue provided from birth is the one that counts the most (and that he calls *nobilitas civilis*).<sup>45</sup> This is the case for Christina: the virtue deriving from her lineage adds to her undoubted ability to achieve virtue through action: “Christina real heir and prosecutor of the blood, of the kingdom and of the virtues of Gustav the Great” is written on an obelisk, which represents, according to the iconography of Ripa, the “Gloria de’ principi” (“Glory of the princes”).<sup>46</sup> The concept is also confirmed in the sentences given below: the authority of Pliny establishes that if illustrious lineage does not determine a good prince, nevertheless it is what really makes it possible to face the difficult task, whereas for Xenophon, “there is nothing

43 “Praeclarus ad virtutem stimulus est illustri sanguine nasci”, Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 11.

44 “Est in sanguine fortitudo, et in Genere virtutis gloria splendescit”, Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 11. Cf. Stefano Fogelberg Rota’s chapter in this volume.

45 Stina Hansson, “Kommentar,” in Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 76. Cf. Aegidius Girs, “*Pro foelici omine & nomine, illustri Suecorum collegio, noviter apud Holmenses auspicato, consecratus de vera nobilitate libellus*.” *Thet är: Om san edelheet en liten tractat, thet nyys vprättade riddarhuuset eller adelighe collegio vthi Stockholm til lyckönskning, beröm och ähre* (Stockholm, 1627).

46 “Christina Gustavi Magni Qua sanguinem. Qua regna virtutes que vera tradux et hæres”, Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 12; Hansson, “Kommentar,” 77–78.

in one person, and in particular in a prince, that I reckon more beautiful and honourable than virtue and justice.”<sup>47</sup>

Among the adages related to the first emblem, gathered under the title of *Deo, naturæ et populo*, the Swedish constitutional system is identified as a *Monarchia mixta*,<sup>48</sup> as underlined by the idea already cited that the sovereign is the image of God: “Every prince is the image of God.”<sup>49</sup>

Among the virtues, the most important appears to be *pietas*, which regulates the relationship with God and, as a consequence, and as witnessed by the adages, the relationship with the subjects who are faithful to a sovereign that recognizes in God and in his law as the highest authority. Furthermore, in the chain that links men with God, the sovereign represents the ring closest to God.

The third section shows the virtues that a prince should possess, those *furstliga dygder* (princely virtues), which are indispensable to be loved and respected and, hence, to maintain power. The pre-eminence of some virtues indicates Rosenhane's desire to promote the image of a sovereign who prefers the serenity and security of peace rather than the dangers and uncertainties of war. Among these virtues one should not only note mercy, gentleness, goodness, humanity, generosity, impartiality and munificence, but also justice and probity, which allow for the sovereign to consider himself subordinate to the law, although formally he is not: when he becomes king, he accepts that agreement with his subjects that in fact legitimizes his role. Upon assuming his role, he becomes above the law, which he cannot however change and whose application he must supervise, failing which the agreement that binds his subjects to obedience will be void.<sup>50</sup>

Another necessary virtue is *fortitudo*, which preserves the state both from enemies and from war itself, which, through the king and his army is prevented by thus striking fear in the enemies. Another important role is obviously played by *prudentia*. Maybe it is not a coincidence that the emblem that towers over the statements about it includes the other virtues related to royalty: a heart represents the good will of the sovereign and his love for the state, his joined hands show his *pietas*, the scales his *iustitia*, the telescope his far-sightedness, the tortoise is a symbol of prudence and safety, and, finally, the image of a two-headed figure is a symbol of the different attributes of *prudentia*—the woman

47 “Ego vero nullas opes viro, ac praesertim Principi pulchiores honestioresque censeo, quam virtutem et iustitiam”, Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 13.

48 See Runeby “*Monarchia Mixta*”; Ellenius, “Om emblematis roll,” 74–75.

49 “È ritratto d'iddio ogni principe.” Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 13.

50 Rosenhane, “*Hortus Regius*,” 17.

with the mirror represents the future and the ability of the cautious sovereign to be provident, the man with the book, the past and, therefore, the necessity for memory. The winged sphinx indicates the union of knowledge and practice. Finally, a pillar surrounded by eyes is the symbol of power and the shield indicates *fortitudo*.<sup>51</sup>

For Rosenhane, although the virtues can be acquired through action, they are mainly acquired by birth and, at the same time, they are indispensable for a sovereign who wants to rule. And if the virtues are those that we unfailingly find in the *specula* and in the treatises we have seen so far, Rosenhane underlines the greater value of the virtues that lead to peace.

The work of Rosenhane was written more or less at the same time as the staging of the ballet *Le Monde Reiovi* [*Réjouï*] and with the same aim of celebrating the queen's coming of age. It is interesting to note here how heroic virtue is explicitly mentioned. The similarities between the two works are remarkable in spite of their significant formal differences: both have a pedagogical use; both posit as fundamental those virtues that lead to peace; both are dedicated to the same sovereign whose virtue is described as invincible because of her birth right.<sup>52</sup>

The central role of education in revealing the princely or royal virtues can be found in the majority of the works analysed or at least this idea is shown by the fact itself of composing a work that aims at depicting the ideal sovereign. However, at the same time, there is no text that considers such virtues a sovereign's prerogative. It is therefore important to investigate whether and how the matter of education of virtues is dealt with in the texts designed for the education of the young aristocrats and to consider what these virtues are.

Against this background, the text of Per Brahe the Elder, *Oeconomia eller huuszholdz-book för ungt adels-folck* (1581), deserves particular attention, which, besides containing an explanation of the knowledge necessary for a nobleman, is in its second part a manual of domestic economy.<sup>53</sup> Much in the same way as Baldassarre Castiglione in *Il libro del Cortegiano*, Brahe recommends to the courtier honesty and sincerity towards the prince, at the expense of his own fortune, and emphasizes the necessity to be himself virtuous.<sup>54</sup> The choice of the preceptor for one's own children is strategic: Alexander the Great had such high and princely virtues thanks to the choice of Aristotle as his

51 Rosenhane, "Hortus Regius," 32.

52 On *Le Monde Reiovi* [*Réjouï*] see in particular Fogelberg Rota's chapter in this volume.

53 Per Brahe, *Oeconomia eller huuszholdz-book för ungt adels-folck*, Johan Granlund and Gösta Holm (eds.), Nordiska museets Handlingar 78 (Lund: Nordiska Museet, 1971).

54 Brahe, *Oeconomia*, 36–38.

master.<sup>55</sup> In Brahe's text, it is also underlined that the virtues are learned and strengthened through education and good examples and that these lessons are also fundamental for aristocrats who, through their virtue, serve the country as the king's advisers.

Among the texts addressed to the children of the Swedish nobility, one is of particular importance in this context because it was written by Johannes Matthiae. It is a curriculum for the *Collegium Illustre*, a school created for the offspring of the Swedish nobility and which, according to its founder and benefactor, Johan Skytte, was to train skilful and trustworthy officers in Sweden, instead of obliging them to travel abroad from an early age.<sup>56</sup> Significantly, the title is *Ratio studiorum* and it recalls from the beginning the much better known *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societas Iesu*, published in its most important version in 1599.<sup>57</sup> Other similarities, of a more strictly pedagogic and didactic nature, can be found in the fifty-four *admonitiones* of the introduction, in which Matthiae sets out his educational theory and practice.<sup>58</sup>

The virtues occupy a significant place in the text: the reason itself for the creation of the school lies in its aim to train virtuous officials and the (predominantly classical) authors who are read are required to have exhibited irreproachable behaviour because "for this reason, our young nobles must not be engaged reading profane and obscene authors; they must not, in the flower of their youth, come into contact with what can easily give them a mean and bad notion of life. Because the Christian nobles must give more emphasis to pure behaviour than to the knowledge of whichever author"<sup>59</sup> and this becomes even more important, as Matthiae explains, when a great part of the teaching consists in learning the biographies of the studied authors. In this context, the study of Cicero becomes even more precious: his life itself was an

55 Brahe, *Oeconomia*, 29.

56 Johannes Matthiae, *Ratio studiorum Ante decennium ad petitionem dd. Directorum illustris. Collegij Stokholmensis concripta, nunc verò in gratiam juventutis* (Stockholm, 1636). For a short history of *Collegium Illustre* see Runeby, "Monarchia Mixta", 182–91.

57 Cf. Mario Salomone (ed.), "Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societas Jesu". *L'ordinamento scolastico dei Collegi Gesuiti* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1979); J.W. Donohue, *Jesuit Education: An Essay on the Foundation of Its Idea* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963); Allan P. Farrell, *The Jesuit Code of Liberal Education: Development and Scope of the Ratio Studiorum* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1938).

58 Matthiae, *Ratio studiorum*, A6r–C2r.

59 "Non igitur admittendi sunt Nobiles nostri ad quosvis autores obscaenos & profanos, nec attingant ea in flore ætatis suæ, ex quibus vitiosum habitum facilimè contrahere possint. Longè enim potior sanctitatis, quam cujuslibet talis Authoris, Nobilibus christianis habenda ratio erit", Matthiae, *Ratio studiorum*, A9.

example of noble virtues, but also of what was considered fundamental for an official. Cicero's life was entirely dedicated to the service of the state and his culture and rhetoric art were completely dedicated to the republic. It was for the republic's well-being and security that he was prepared to sacrifice himself and all of his resources. However, the virtues that the state officials must possess are never specified, nor are they called heroic, although it would not be completely unreasonable to investigate whether this potential sacrifice to the welfare of the state had anything to do with the theological idea of heroic virtues as the set of attributes that are essential for sanctity.

There is another text by Matthiae which, although directly addressed to Christina in a pedagogic way, differs significantly from the *specula principes*: it is a short grammar book of Latin entitled *Ratio Discendi linguam latina pro Christina Suecorum etc Regina designata*, published in 1635.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the text would be absolutely of no relevance for the purpose of this investigation, were it not for the fact that, at the end of the booklet, there is an *Indiculus*, in which Matthiae briefly describes the authors, the subjects and the languages Christina should know. In a few lines he summarizes the main objectives of each: the real religion (*Orthodoxæ religionis*); a real and straight discipline (*rectæ disciplina*); and the maintenance of honest behaviour (*honestorum morum cura*). He also indicates what virtues are fundamental for a just kingdom and the real ornament to each sovereign, making a list of the most significant of them: *Pietas, Prudentia, Iustitia, Clementia, Fortitudo, Liberalitas, Fides, Veritas, Temperantia, Continentia*.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, for Matthiae too, these are the virtues that decorate a sovereign and hence, although he does not give them that name, they are those that the other authors indicate by the expression 'kungliga dygder' and/or 'furstliga dygder'.

In the light of this close examination of the above texts, how should one interpret the letter by Johannes Matthiae? Certainly in a Swedish context, albeit already used in several academic discourses, disputations, dissertations and so forth, the expression *virtus heroica* had not found any employment in a strictly political context. Besides, from a religious point of view, even if decreed by Urban VIII as an element *sine qua non* in the process of canonization, it was still not yet a part of the public discourse on sainthood. Matthiae refers specifically to the virtue of *pietas* as being amongst the heroic virtues that mainly characterize Christina and this appears logical in light of the letter. But Matthiae informs us that the queen was already known and admired by many

60 Johannes Matthiae, *Ratio discendi linguam Latina pro Christina Suecorum & C. Regina designata* (Stockholm, 1635).

61 Matthiae, *Ratio discendi*, 49.

for her great charity and therefore it was not her conversion that gave her the heroic virtues. Her charity and the other heroic virtues come from her role as queen, or better still from her royal lineage. Indeed as Fogelberg Rota states, “heroic virtue is introduced to underline the continuity between Christina’s reign and that of her father.” The heroic nature of the virtues thus becomes a prerogative of the sovereign Christina and has little to do with religious choice.<sup>62</sup>

In the texts analysed, the expression *virtus heroica* appears only once in Matthiae, while the virtues that sovereigns must possess are often invoked: they are essentially the cardinal virtues, but they are possessed by sovereigns to a greater extent than by other men. The most important among them seem to be *prudentia* and *iustitia*. They are necessary to guarantee good governance and to ensure that the sovereign is surrounded by trusted advisers because, through these virtues, they administer the kingdom together for the benefit of the people.

These characteristics are those that in other political contexts are designated with the term *virtus heroica*. Why is this expression not used in the Swedish context, even though the sovereign is recognized as possessing such characteristics?

One answer might be found in the specific Swedish political structure. Indeed this, as we have briefly suggested, is characterized by the joint presence of a strong aristocratic power base and by a monarchy that, at least formally, is elected; the *Magnus Erikssons landslag* explicitly speaks of the duty of the king to govern with the council of the council (“med råds råde”). Indeed the texts that refer to works conceived for different political contexts (*Konungastyrelsen* and the *Barnabok* of Peder Månsson) extend and underline the role of counsellors and trustworthy men, insisting that they need to be chosen with care and that they should be no less virtuous than the sovereign himself. It is in this ability to choose that the virtue of *prudentia* is exercised. To strengthen this hypothesis one can point to the difference between the ballet dedicated to Christina in which *virtus heroica* plays an important role and the contemporary *Hortus regius*, which makes no mention of it. If my interpretation is correct, Rosenhane, who demonstrates more or less open sympathy with the French *fronde*,<sup>63</sup> would not have been able to use a concept that referred back (in the European tradition) to a legitimization of the absolute power of the sovereign (and even less so to its independence from an aristocratic council or from the diet). Therefore, in the Swedish context, the absence of a defining

62 Fogelberg Rota’s chapter in this volume.

63 See Runeby, “Monarchia Mixta”, 410–18; Hansson, “Efterskrift,” 160–61; Fogelberg Rota’s chapter in this volume.

and exclusive characteristic for the sovereign seems to be due to the presence of a strong aristocracy who laid a long claim to the elective nature of the title of king, and its own constitutional role at the side of the chosen sovereign. Thus the king cannot have characteristics that differentiate him from the other nobles—his potential equals in the exercise of command.

Such a reading of the Swedish partial silence on heroic virtue strengthens the overall picture that seems to emerge regarding the use of the concept of heroic virtue. It is closely connected to the idea of a strong monarch who competes and attempts to reduce the power of the assemblies and the councils of nobles to concentrate them more and more in his own hands.

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# The Absolute Hero: Heroic Greatness and Royal Absolutism in Sweden 1685–1715

Andreas Hellerstedt

But as to the training of the mind, the prudent prince reads histories and observes in them the actions of excellent men, sees how they have conducted themselves in wars, observes the causes for their victories and defeats, in order to escape the latter and imitate the former; above all, he does as some excellent men have done in the past; they selected for imitation some man earlier than themselves who was praised and honored, and his actions and heroic deeds they always kept before them, as it is said Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus.<sup>1</sup>

Controversial as he was, Machiavelli's advice in *The Prince* on how to imitate great men through the study of history is representative of the Renaissance ideal of princely virtue. The difference between Machiavelli and his contemporaries was not so much a question of the goals in themselves, but the means of achieving them. That a Renaissance prince was to seek glory, fame and greatness was in itself a commonplace.<sup>2</sup> In seventeenth-century art, the kings and princes of Europe were consequently portrayed in the roles of the famous heroes and great men of antiquity. In Sweden, the last of the kings of the house of Pfalz-Zweibrücken, Charles XII (1682–1718), is famous for his imitation of

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1 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999 [1989]), 56–57. “Ma quanto allo esercizio della mente, debbe el principe leggere le istorie e in quelle considerare le azioni delli uomini eccellenti, vedere come si sono governati nelle guerre, esaminare le cagione delle vittorie e perdite loro per potere queste fuggire e quelle imitare e, soprattutto, fare come ha fatto per lo addreto qualche uomo eccellente che ha preso a imitare se alcuno innanzi a lui è stato laudato e gloriato e, di quello, ha tenuto sempre e' gesti e azioni appresso di sé, come si dice, che Alessandro Magno imitava Achille, Cesare Alessandro, Scipione Ciro.” Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2009 [1531]), 163. The research for this chapter was funded by a grant from the Swedish National Defense College (Försvarshögskolan). All translations in this chapter are my own unless otherwise stated.

2 See for instance Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1978]), 134–135, Sten Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, vol. 2 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1975), 190–197.

Alexander the Great, expressed not only in art, but also in the king's personal conduct.<sup>3</sup> To modern ears, Early Modern panegyric sounds unbearably pompous. But in the seventeenth century, anything less would have been considered a breach of decorum. It was appropriate to praise a king in the high style, and the high style meant classical mythology, heroes and their extraordinary deeds.<sup>4</sup> Where such princely art and literature carried a deeper symbolism and expressed a more elaborated ideology, artists and writers could draw on the concept of heroic virtue.

An early and influential representation of heroic virtue within the mainstream of the mirror for princes genre was Guillaume Budé's *Livre de l'Institution du Prince* (written 1518–19, printed 1547–48). Alexander the Great is presented as the great example to contemporary kings and princes, and heroic virtues are presented as royal virtues, in an argument for a strong monarchy. An elevated king must surpass other men through education and wisdom, although the quest for honour and fame also features prominently. However, even in this traditional mainstream view, royal wisdom can be understood at least partly as a surface phenomenon, part of the prince's image-making.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of heroic virtue was not monolithic and unchanging, but rather a malleable idea used in a variety of ways in different political contexts. German literary historian Martin Disselkamp has argued that the modern ideology of absolute monarchy hid beneath the surface of the representations of heroic royalty in seventeenth-century Europe. This fact also gives the hero a darker side, as the line between the ideal heroic prince and the effective but ruthless Machiavellian politician dissolved. According to Disselkamp, the conflict inherent in Early Modern conceptions of the heroic consequently led to a crisis for the hero around 1700, coinciding with an ideological crisis of absolute monarchy.<sup>6</sup> Even to contemporaries it was, in other words, clear that heroic

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3 I have touched on the subject of Charles's imitation of Alexander, Andreas Hellerstedt, *Ödets teater: Ödesföreställningar i Sverige vid 1700-talets början* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2009), 117–138, and so has Erik Sandstedt, "Karl XII och Alexander-rollen," *Karolinska förbundets årsbok* (2000). Louis XIV was of course also often portrayed as and compared to Alexander, and the king of Macedon was his "favourite comparison, at least in the 1660s". Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994 [1992]), 28, 35, 68–69, 126–127.

4 Burke, *The Fabrication*, 25, 36, Kurt Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken: Studier i svensk barock*, Lychnos-bibliotek 24 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 32–33, 38–39.

5 Martin Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus: Konzeptionen "politischer" Größe in Literatur und Traktatistik des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Frühe Neuzeit 65 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 158ff.

6 Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*.

virtue could function as little more than a thin mask legitimizing crude power politics.

In this chapter, I will analyse the use of the concept of the hero in texts written in Sweden during the period of absolute monarchy, the Caroline autocracy (*det karolinska enväldet*), which lasted from 1680 until the death of Charles XII in 1718. During this time the “military state” of Sweden, heir to the glorious conquests of Gustavus Adolphus and Charles X, sought to consolidate and preserve its newly won position on the European political scene. In doing so, it turned to an ideology of absolute monarchy, formally established in the reign of Charles XI, and continued by his son Charles XII, who reigned without summoning the estates.<sup>7</sup> The arguments for strong monarchy were always closely connected to war, and this was particularly evident in the case of Sweden. Among the strongest arguments in favour of absolutism was effectiveness in

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7 The validity of the concept of absolutism has been questioned in the research of recent decades. Nicholas Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy* (London & New York: Longman, 1992) has forcefully argued that the term is essentially useless. The differences between allegedly ‘absolutist’ France and ‘constitutionalist’ England have been exaggerated: Early Modern monarchy did not establish modern bureaucracies, but relied heavily on mafia-style personal relations; no European king could tax his subjects without their consent (of one form or the other), no matter how ‘absolute’. On the other hand, absolute power was in fact the traditional norm (and no novelty of the seventeenth century) when the king was acting within his prerogative, even in England. Above all, the most prominent ‘absolutist’ kings (e.g., Louis XIV) ruled only through effective “management” of local and regional elites and “corporate power groups”. Henshall *The Myth of Absolutism*, 9–11, 17, 27, 32–33, 39–49, 51, 56, 64, 66–67, 73, 75, 84, 91, 97, 107, 127, 144, 129, 135, 153, 155, 171–173, 180, 183, 189, 211–212. Henshall’s work in turn has given rise to a great debate, where Heinz Duchhardt has supported Henshall’s position, and in particular argues that the term absolutism should be avoided when labelling the entire period (as the ‘Age of Absolutism’). Heinz Duchhardt, “Die Absolutismusdebatte—eine Antipolemik,” *Historische Zeitschrift*, 275:2 (October 2002), Heinz Duchhardt, “Absolutismus—Abchied von einem Epochenbegriff?,” *Historische Zeitschrift*, 258:1 (February 1994). Peter H. Wilson has defended the use of the term absolutism while admitting the validity of at least parts of Henshall’s criticisms, Peter H. Wilson, *Absolutism in Central Europe*, Historical Connections (London: Routledge, 2000). I have chosen to use the term ‘absolutism’ in a pragmatic way for the purposes of this chapter. I will term ‘absolutist’ only the ideology of the Swedish Caroline autocracy. I agree with Duchhardt that this term is inappropriate as an ‘Epochenbegriff’, but I do believe that it is still useful for characterizing the political conditions prevalent in Sweden between 1680 and 1718. Furthermore, it should be stressed that this chapter is concerned not with political and constitutional practice or the actual effectiveness of absolutism, but with its ideology and its efforts to legitimize itself. Thus I am concerned more with the ambitions and the image making of the Swedish monarchy, and these can, in my view, rightly be termed absolutist.

war. Many scholars agree that the demands of seventeenth-century warfare forced the Early Modern state to develop, and that the same state also sought war to meet the ever-increasing demands for resources to sustain the state.<sup>8</sup> The political developments in the wake of the Thirty Years War seemed to confirm that a strong, if not 'absolutist', military state was the only means of survival. In Poland, the weak state of the 'republic of nobles' was ravaged by effective modern armies from centralized neighbour states, such as Sweden. Absolute monarchy seemed to provide order and stability in a period of war and chaos. It is therefore natural that the image of the hero presented in this context was that of a military commander and a king.

It is also clear that ancient history was still considered a useful guide in military and political matters in the seventeenth century. Maurice of Orange, generally held to be one of the driving men behind a number of successful innovations in military tactics in the early seventeenth century, commissioned editions and translations of ancient historians as well as original works on ancient warfare by the famous humanists working in the Netherlands at the time. In fact, he even invited them to work with him as desktop generals using ancient history and toy soldiers.<sup>9</sup> The same relationship between late Renaissance humanism and political and military practice can be seen in Sweden. In 1654, the most famous Swedish humanist, Strasbourg-born Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679), published a treatise on ancient naval warfare, *De militia navali veterum*, describing in great detail ship construction, navigation, weaponry and tactics and in 1664 he published an edition of the military works of the Greek writers, Arrian and Maurice (Maurikios): *Arriani tactica & Mauricii arti militari libri duodecim omnia*.<sup>10</sup> History was of course also useful as a basis for the praise of kings. Peter Burke has stressed that while artists and men of letters of all sorts were patronized by Louis XIV, particular attention was paid to the royal historiographers (Boileau and Racine among them). Ancient history would sometimes take the form of allegory. When the king ordered the paintings of scenes from the life of Alexander (by Lebrun), this did not only express

8 Jan Lindegren, "Den svenska militärstaten," in *Magtstaten i Norden i 1600-tallet og de sociale konsekvenser*, Rapporter til den XIX nordiske historikerkongress Odense 1984, Bind 1 (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1986), 108–109; Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 [1996]), 80, 147; Lars Ericsson [Wolke], "Det trettioåriga kriget, Sverige och forskningen," in *Vägen till Westfaliska freden: Sverige och trettioåriga kriget* (Lund: Historiska Media, 1998), 23–26.

9 Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 76–78.

10 Lindroth, *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, vol. 2, 206–212.

admiration; Louis identified himself with Alexander, and those who viewed these works were expected to do so as well.<sup>11</sup>

Heroic virtue was a common subject for dissertations at Swedish universities during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as it was in universities in Early Modern Germany. It was part of the standard curriculum of Aristotelian moral philosophy.<sup>12</sup> After the fall of Caroline absolutism, the subject seems to have become less popular in Sweden, as honour was, in the words of literary historian Sven Delblanc, “democratized,”<sup>13</sup> although a dissertation *De virtute heroica* was defended at Uppsala as late as 1770.<sup>14</sup>

The origins of the concept of heroic virtue are to be found in Aristotle. The *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* were the foundations for university teachings on moral philosophy and politics during much of the Early Modern period. In late seventeenth-century Sweden, politics was still in essence an Aristotelian subject. However, within this general framework, things were beginning to change. Among the new ideas, three distinct sets of concepts must be mentioned here: Jean Bodin’s concept of sovereignty; theories of *raison d’état*, in Sweden more often referred to in Latin as *ratio status*, such as those of Giovanni Botero; and, last but not least, modern natural law, as put forward by Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf. These new systems of thought all influenced the Aristotelian conception of politics in various ways.

In the Aristotelian system, politics and ethics were based on the virtues. Cicero’s *De Officiis* (an enormously important text at Swedish universities) contained a popular formulation of the four cardinal virtues. Justice, fortitude, practical wisdom and temperance were all middle ways between two extremes. Of these, the most important political virtues were justice and practical wisdom (*prudentia*), with justice taking precedence in Cicero’s work.<sup>15</sup> As already mentioned, however, it was also common to talk about virtue in quite another way in certain contexts. Heroic virtue suited Early Modern Europe particularly well, as monarchy was now the generally preferred form of government, as opposed to the self-governing aristocratic republic envisioned by Aristotle.

11 Burke, *The Fabrication*, 28, 53, 75.

12 Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 24, 27.

13 Sven Delblanc, *Åra och minne: Studier kring ett motivkomplex i 1700-talets litteratur* (diss. Uppsala; Stockholm: Bonniers, 1965), 12–13, 15–19, 21, 114–116.

14 Johan Ihre/P. Z. Juringius, *De Virtute Heroica* [...] (Upsalia, 1770). See also Jennie Nell’s chapter in this volume.

15 Cicero, *De Officiis*. With an English Translation by Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997 [1913]), 16–164 (1:5–45); see also for instance John Finnis, “Aquinas’ Moral, Political and Legal Philosophy,” § 4, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed March 19, 2012, <http://plato.stanford.edu/>.



Heroic virtue was a concept well suited to panegyric, but did not always conform well with Christian moral values. Augustine had, in an often-quoted passage of *De civitate dei*, said that the Christian martyrs were the real heroes, as the classical virtues had a limited value in an age of Christianity.<sup>16</sup>

Heroic virtue and the ancient heroes themselves are good examples of how seventeenth-century humanism often struggled to harmonize classical and Christian ideas and values. There were a number of different ways to resolve the tensions. For some, the Christian religion always had primacy, and they corrected every fault in the classical texts to conform to it. As Iiro Kajanto has shown, this strategy was widely used in seventeenth-century Sweden, where a strictly orthodox Lutheran church was highly influential, not least in the universities. Others tended to separate religious from worldly affairs, claiming that subjects such as politics or natural science could be studied using ancient texts, as long as religious issues were kept to one side. This latter strategy was, in my view, the one adopted by the very important German *späthumanisten* who dominated much of intellectual life in Sweden in the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>17</sup>

In the seventeenth century, virtue was often defined as that quality that distinguished humans from other animals. In Aristotelian terms, this meant reason, as a human being was defined as a rational animal. If heroic virtue exceeded regular human virtue, as Aristotle held, it would seem to follow that heroes were more than human or even inhuman. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, heroic virtue is used as a counterpart to beastliness, *feritas* or *immanitas*.<sup>18</sup> For classical antiquity this may, or may not, have posed a problem. The traditional view of heroes such as Hercules, around whom important cults were centred, was of course that they were born of one mortal and one immortal parent, and

16 "Hos multo elegantius, si ecclesiastica loquendi consuetudo pateretur, nostros heroas vocaremus." Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard university Press, 1968), 344 (X:21).

17 This problem is treated at great length by Iiro Kajanto, *Humanism in a Christian Society*, vol. 1, *Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ*, 248 (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 1989).

18 The passage is explicated as follows in the commentaries to the Latin edition of the fifteenth-century Florentine humanist, Donato Acciaivoli: "Heroica autem virtus est optima, & plus quam virtus: ergo heroica virtus immanitati siue feritati opponitur. Item, Rarissimo vitio opponitur rarissima virtus: at feritas est vitium rarissimum: heroica quoque est virtus rarissima: ergo feritati opponetur heroica virtus", *Aristotelis Stagiritæ peripateticorum principis Ethicorum ad Nicomachum libri decem. Ioanne Argyropylo Byzantio interprete, nuper ad Graecum exemplar diligentissime recogniti. Cum Donati Acciaivoli Florentini viri doctissimi Commentarijs, denuo in lucem editi* (Lugdunum, 1559), 562–563.

thus semi-divine. Granting human beings semi-divine status would, however, seem to be a major obstacle for Christian humanists, particularly those of a Lutheran conviction, generally inclined to stress man's sinfulness rather than his proximity to the divine.

Risto Saarinen has studied the theological underpinnings of heroic virtue in a Swedish Lutheran context. Philip Melanchthon was important in shaping Lutheran views on the subject. According to Melanchthon, heroic virtue had a natural foundation—heroic virtue was a divine gift, even though it achieves nothing for our salvation, being as it is a worldly virtue. He also stated that heroic virtue is not to be imitated, as it is, as he terms it, *extra regulam*.<sup>19</sup> Melanchthon's views were, as will soon be evident, highly influential.

In the Renaissance, an interesting representation of the problematic nature of heroic and princely virtue was the image of Chiron, the teacher of heroes. According to Greek myth, the centaur Chiron, half beast and half man, raised a number of famous heroes, most importantly Achilles. In Andrea Alciati's widely read book of emblems, the *Liber Emblematum* (1531), we find Chiron in emblem number 146. The motto of the emblem is *Consiliarii principum* (councillors of princes). The subscription teaches the reader that

Whoever wishes to assist kings should learn to be a semi-feral scholar and a demi-human Centaur.

He is a wild beast when violating his allies and when he is striking down his enemies.

He is also a man, when he pretends to be pious in front of the people.<sup>20</sup>

The prince must be a wild beast and a deceiver: there is of course another very famous reference to this myth, the one in Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, chapter 18.

Therefore he needs to know well how to put to use the traits of animal and of man. This conduct is taught to princes in allegory by ancient authors,

19 Risto Saarinen, "Die heroische Tugend in der protestantischen Ethik. Von Melanchthon zu den Anfängen der finnischen Universität Turku," in *Melanchthon und Europa*, vol. 1, Skandinavien und Mitteleuropa, Melanchthon-schriften der Stadt Bretten, 6:1, Frank Günter and Martin Treu (eds.), (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001), 130–133, 136–138.

20 "Semiferum doctorem, & semivirum Centaurum, / Assideat quisquis Regibus, esse decet. Est fera, dum violat socios, dum proterit hostes: / Estq[ue] homo, dum simulat se populo esse pium." *Andreas Alciatus 1: The Latin Emblems: Indexes and Lists*, Peter M. Daly (ed.), (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), emblem 146.

who write that Achilles and many other well-known ancient princes were given for upbringing to Chiron the Centaur, who was to guard and educate them. This does not mean anything else (this having as teacher one who is half animal and half man) than that a prince needs to know how to adopt the nature of either animal or man, for one without the other does not secure him permanence.<sup>21</sup>

In fact it is very likely that Alciati used Machiavelli's text as the basis for the emblem. Machiavelli broke with an older tradition, where Chiron was portrayed as a wise teacher, divine rather than beastly, and a symbol of the taming of man's animal nature by the dictates of reason. In *Contre-Machiavel* (1576), Innocent Gentillet returned to the tradition in criticizing Machiavelli. Gentillet claimed that divine Chiron had in fact educated Achilles in all the heroic virtues that bring man closer to God.<sup>22</sup> Thus the hero was already in the sixteenth century an ambivalent figure around whom issues of the nature of political morality would naturally be raised.

### Heroic Greatness at Uppsala 1685–1715

The three texts chosen for this analysis are dissertations defended at Uppsala university in 1685, 1698 and 1715,<sup>23</sup> spanning almost the whole of the period of Swedish absolutism (conventionally 1680–1718). These texts are comparatively long at 95, 50 and 80 pages respectively (more typically dissertations were 16, 24 or 32 pages). They are lavish rhetorical showpieces, serving primarily as ideological representations, which was an important function of the Early Modern university. The *praeses* at the defense of the first dissertation, entitled

21 Machiavelli, *The Chief Works*, 64–65, “pertanto a uno principe è necessario sapere bene usare la bestia e lo uomo. Questa parte è suta insegnata alli principi copertamente da li antichi scrittori, e' quali scrivono come Achille e molti altri di quelli principi antichi furno dati a nutrire a Chirone centauro che sotto la sua disciplina li custodissi, il che non vuole dire altro avere per precettore uno mezzo bestia e mezzo uomo, se non che bisogna a uno principe sapere usare l'una e l'altra natura, e l'una senza l'altra non è durabile.” Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, 176.

22 Heather Ingman, “Machiavelli and the Interpretation of the Chiron Myth in France,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 45 (1982), 218–220.

23 Andreas Norcopensis/Nils Clewberg, *Instar Academicum Quo Character Heroum [...] Delineatus [...] exhibetur* (Holmia, 1685); Hemming Forelius/Nils Barchius, *De Indole Heroica dissertatio* (Upsalia, 1698); Johan Upmarck/Nils Palmstierna, *Dissertatio Philosophica De Vera Animi Magnitudine Heroica [...]* (Upsalia, 1715).

*Character Heroum*, was Andreas Norcopensis, Professor of Eloquence, and the *respondens* was a student named Nils Clewberg. Norcopensis, or Nordenhielm, as he was called after his ennoblement a year later, is well known in Swedish historiography as the tutor of the crown prince, Charles (subsequently King Charles XII). This fact is worth noting in the present context, as much of the contents of the dissertations, all three of them, show significant similarities to the texts and exercises Nordenhielm used for the crown prince's education.<sup>24</sup>

In 1698, Nils Barchius defended his dissertation *De Indole Heroica* under his *praeses*, Hemming Forelius, Professor of Classical Poetry. Barchius, like Clewberg, went on to be a pastor, ending his career as bishop of Västerås. Professor Forelius had himself defended a dissertation in 1681 under Norcopensis (they were both born in the town of Norrköping, from which Norcopensis's name is derived). That text, *Gubernacula Imperii Togati*, is in effect a short mirror for princes, drawing on recent literature on government and *raison d'état*, including a number of references to Machiavelli's *Principe*.<sup>25</sup>

In 1715, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine Heroica* was defended under the *presidium* of the *professor skytteanus*, Professor of Eloquence and Politics, Johan Upmarck. The student defending the text was, unusually, a nobleman, Nils Palmstierna. Palmstierna's disputation was not, however, for the master's degree, as in the cases of Clewberg and Barchius. As a nobleman he had little use for a formal degree. He went on to become an officer in the Swedish army, and later, after the fall of absolutism, he served as a member of the Riksdag. As a politician, he was a leading Hat Party member of the Secret Committee (*Sekreta utskottet*) where he aggressively argued for war with Russia in 1741 (a war that ended in catastrophic failure for Sweden).<sup>26</sup>

The question of who actually wrote the university dissertations in this period is not clear. It is likely that some were written by professors, some by students, while yet many others were collaborative efforts. The question of authorship is therefore best left to one side for the moment. However, it is reasonable to treat these dissertations as representing an authorized view of the issues discussed. They put forward a view of politics sanctioned by the state. Nothing less would

24 Kungliga biblioteket (Stockholm), The Crown Prince Charles' (Charles XII) notebook 1688–1692, ms D761; for instance no. 84, about the "prudens imperator", and no. 91 about the "vir fortis" who must battle with an adverse fortune.

25 Andreas Norcopensis/Hemming Forelius, *Gubernacula Imperii Togati*. Ex Flor. lib. 1. cap. 2. §. 4. [...] (Holmia, 1681).

26 *Nordisk Familjebok* (Stockholm: Nordisk Familjeboks förlag, 1904–1926), vol. 20, 1370–1371; Carl Gustaf Malmström, *Sveriges politiska historia från konung Karl XII:s död till statshälfningen 1772*, vol. 2 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1895 [2 ed.]), 399–400, 403, 420–430.

have been allowed in Sweden in this period. Censorship was harsh on political and religious issues, and remained so well into the following period, the so-called 'Age of Liberty'. The connections between the Swedish crown and the university of Uppsala were also generally strong, but in these cases there are some particular personal connections worthy of mention. That Norcopensis had great favour at court is evident from his subsequent appointment as tutor to the future king. Furthermore, the 1685 dissertation is dedicated to a number of prominent supporters of absolutism, brothers Christopher and Carl Gyllenstierna and Olof Thegner, the former speaker of the burghers' estate at the important Riksdagar of Charles XI's reign. The 1698 Forelius/Barchius dissertation is dedicated to Bengt Oxenstierna who is praised as "a hero of incomparable piety, virtue and prudence".<sup>27</sup> Oxenstierna was a leading diplomat of the period with a decisive influence on the shaping of Swedish foreign policy, and at this time he was also chancellor of Uppsala University. The 1715 dissertation of Upmarck/Palmstierna is dedicated to Frederick of Hessen-Kassel, the future King Frederick I of Sweden, who only months previously had married Princess Ulrika Eleonora, sister of King Charles XII. Frederick, well known as a capable military commander, is praised for his heroic virtue, which, through the workings of a benevolent fate, has now come to the aid of the Swedish fatherland.<sup>28</sup> The genre of mirrors for princes often contained at least an element of panegyric, and these three dissertations, being very close to this genre, also share this characteristic. They contain images of an ideal prince and military commander, and advice on how to rule, but also more or less direct praise for the wisdom of the current government, above all the reigning kings, Charles XI and XII.

It must be stressed that the ideas discussed here make up only part of the ideology of the Caroline autocracy. Furthermore, there were many proponents of a strong monarchy in Sweden long before the so-called period of absolutism. Some modern historians have chosen to describe the seventeenth-century king, privy council and parliament as parts of an absolute state, regardless of whether it was in fact headed by an absolute king or not.<sup>29</sup> Others have claimed that absolutism was introduced with so little opposition because a strong monarchical government was an ideal already shared almost universally.

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27 "[...] heroi, pietate, virtue, prudentia, incomparabili [...]", Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, dedicatory epistle.

28 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, dedicatory epistle.

29 Lindegren, "Den svenska militärstaten," 102.

To 'tie the king's hands', as the expression went, was considered a violation of the king's majesty long before 1680.<sup>30</sup>

Having said that, the ideology of Swedish absolutism can be divided into at least four distinct elements (even though these often worked together). First of all there were theocratic arguments. These are likely to have been the most important. They reached all segments of the population through the national church, but the kings themselves also considered them to be the basis for their claim to sovereign power. The theocratic arguments have been well covered in recent research.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, there was a foundation for the form of government in modern natural law.<sup>32</sup> A third element was the 'Gothicism' of Olaus Rudbeck, which has also received some attention in previous studies.<sup>33</sup> The fourth element of the ideology of Swedish absolutism was a particular brand of Renaissance humanism, to the extent that Iiro Kajanto has termed the seventeenth-century in Sweden the "Age of Humanism".<sup>34</sup> In the middle of the century, a number of prominent German humanists were brought to Sweden in an effort to make the country, already a rising authority in political and military affairs, a great power in terms of culture and learning. Johannes Freinsheimius (1608–1660), Johann Heinrich Boeclerus (1611–1672) and his disciple, Johannes Schefferus (1621–1679), all previously professors in Strasbourg, were among the most important. This late form of Renaissance humanism is the element of Swedish absolutist ideology to which the texts studied here are most closely related.

30 Anthony F. Upton, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism*, Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 16–17, 23–24, 33–34, 37, 39–40, 46–47, 127–128.

31 Nils Ekedahl, *Det svenska Israel: Myt och retorik i Haquin Spegels predikokonst*, Studia rhetorica upsaliensia, 2 (diss. Uppsala: Gidlunds, 1999); Peter Ericsson, *Stora nordiska kriget förklarar: Karl XI och det ideologiska tilltalet*, Studia historica upsaliensia, 202 (diss. Uppsala, 2002); Carl Edvard Norman, *Prästerskapet och det karolinska enväldet. Studier över det svenska prästerskapets statsuppfattning under stormaktstidens slutskede*, Samlingar och studier till svenska kyrkans historia, 17 (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses bokförlag, 1948). Ingun Montgomery, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*, vol. 4 (Stockholm: Verbum, 2002), in particular 140–144. The personal views of Charles XI; Upton, *Charles XI*, 21–23.

32 Bo Lindberg, *Naturrätten i Uppsala 1655–1720*, Skrifter rörande Uppsala universitet, C: Organisation och historia, 33 (diss. Uppsala, 1976); The professor of law at Uppsala, Carolus Lundius (1638–1715), combined natural law and theocratic arguments, and was also a fervent gothicist: Lindberg, *Naturrätten i Uppsala*, 145–155.

33 E.g. Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision: Olaus Rudbeck and Baroque Science*, Uppsala studies in History of Science, 19 (Canton, Mass.: Science History Publications, 1994), Lindberg, *Naturrätten i Uppsala*, 87–89.

34 Kajanto, *Humanism*, 12.

The abovementioned German scholars all shared an intellectual background and some common ideas. Around Mathias Bernegger (1582–1640), Professor of History and Rhetoric in Strasbourg, there had developed a school of humanist thought termed *oberrheinischer Tacitismus* or simply ‘the Strasbourg school’. Using the philological tools of Renaissance humanism, Bernegger and his disciple, Boeclerus, tackled political and social issues relevant to the age. In a break with older humanist thought, they no longer sought an idealized classical world, but transferable patterns for action and models for a new political order. In doing so they were also trying to save classical education by reforming it with an eye to the utility of the state, as Wilhelm Kühlmann has pointed out.<sup>35</sup>

The educational policies of King Gustavus Adolphus and Queen Christina are similar to the developments in Germany studied by Kühlmann. The *professor skytteanus* chair of rhetoric and politics, founded in 1622, was intended to serve the growing demands for well-educated civil servants. In Christina’s reign, the Strasbourg humanists Freinsheimius (1642–1647) and Schefferus (1647–79) were invited to the prestigious and well-paid professorship. Boeclerus was offered it but declined and eventually served instead as Professor of Rhetoric at Uppsala in 1649–1650. These men were succeeded by Swedish scholars who continued in the same tradition, so that, as Hans Helander has put it, “[a]nother golden age of Latin literature in Sweden may be said to start after the time of these European scholars.” A circle of poets and professors at Uppsala University dominated the Swedish literary scene towards the end of the seventeenth century. Their works are characterized by a synthesis of panegyric rhetoric and epic poetry in praise of the Caroline regime.<sup>36</sup>

The three Latin dissertations from Uppsala on the heroic theme are very similar to one another. The titles immediately indicate something interesting: “The character of heroes”, “The heroic talent” and “The true heroic magnanimity”. None of them is entitled *De virtute heroica* (‘On heroic virtue’), as was typical (a number of dissertations with that exact title do exist, although they are earlier or later in date). There is a reason for this: these texts are written within a broadly Aristotelian framework, but they do not so much concern virtue as that innate quality in a man that is a prerequisite for heroic virtue.

35 Wilhelm Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat: Entwicklung und Kritik des deutschen Späthumanismus in der Literatur des Barockzeitalters*, Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, 3 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1982), 46, 51–52, 52–53, 55, 60, 65–66, 82–84, 285–286, 321–329, 351–365; Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 78.

36 Hans Helander, *Neo-Latin Literature in Sweden in the Period 1620–1720: Stylistics, Vocabulary and Characteristic Ideas*, Studia Latina Upsaliensia, 29 (Uppsala, 2004), 18; Johannesson, *I polstjärnans tecken*, 32–33, 107, 256, 276.



The particular view of heroic greatness expounded in the dissertations has its origin in a short work by Johann Heinrich Boeclerus, the *Characteres Politici in Velleio Paterculo*, which was printed in several editions in the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup> The definitions of a hero and the qualities that characterize him have been taken from the *Characteres*. This is not surprising, as Disselkamp has shown that Boeclerus had a strong influence on the treatment of the same subject in Germany in this period as well.<sup>38</sup> Boeclerus's *Characteres* is also listed in the instructions for Nordenhielm's education of Prince Charles.<sup>39</sup>

Johann Heinrich Boeclerus was Professor of Rhetoric in Strasbourg when he was called to Sweden by the queen. He soon left his chair at Uppsala, claiming that the students had beaten him, thrown rocks and even shot at him. After briefly working as Historiographer Royal, he left the country in 1652.<sup>40</sup> According to Swedish historian Nils Runeby, the political tendency towards a strong monarchy (in Runeby's view, it is "safest" not to call it absolutism) in the reign of Charles X (1622–1660) was preceded by a corresponding intellectual tendency in Christina's reign, and among the authors mentioned are both Boeclerus and Schefferus. They were, in Runeby's view, part of a group of "followers and disciples of Lipsius". They were advocates of a strong monarchy and *ratio status*, who sided with the commoner estates in parliament, and based their teachings on Justus Lipsius.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear from the outset that the Swedish dissertations, in accordance with the teachings of Strasbourg political humanism, present the classical heroes as politically useful. In the very first paragraph, Norcopensis/Clewberg claim that history contains much political philosophy, which contributes to our understanding of important and difficult matters of state. The doctrine of heroism is presented as a secret, about to be revealed.<sup>42</sup> It is also clear that the utility of history in this sense has little to do with morality. The ancient examples are worthy of study because they were successful, not because they were good.

37 1642, 1663 and 1672; I have used the 1672 edition.

38 Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 69–78. However, Disselkamp stresses another work, the *Historia schola principum* (published as a dissertation at Strassbourg in 1640), and does not mention the *Characteres*.

39 Kungliga biblioteket (Stockholm), Instruction for Andreas Nordenhielm, March 29, 1690, MS D730, 24.

40 G. Jacobson, "Johann Heinrich Boeclerus", *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.nad.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/17845>.

41 Nils Runeby, *Monarchia Mixta: Maktfördelningsdebatt i Sverige under den tidigare stormaktstiden*, *Studia historica upsaliensia*, 6 (diss. Uppsala, 1962), 354–355, 359–363, 366, 371, 422, 462–464, 468–469, 533, 537.

42 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 1.

They are morally ambivalent. As human beings, they were tainted by sin, but their actions were not necessarily sins.<sup>43</sup>

Aside from this statement on the utility of history, the academic texts begin as was usual, with definitions and etymologies. A number of different explanations are presented. Is the Greek word, *heros*, derived from the word for air (*aer*), or from the goddess Hera's name, or even from the Chaldean word for white? One etymology that is given particular weight is that the word *hero* derives from the Greek word for love (*eros*), representing the hero's love of the divine and the right.<sup>44</sup>

Aristotle's definition of heroic virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is also quoted. The hero is characterized by a virtue, which exceeds the normal human condition. Heroes surpass normal human beings so much that they come closer to the divine than to human frailty. The pagans of antiquity were fundamentally right in praising the glorious actions of great men, but making them demi-gods was going too far; it was a superstition caused by flattery.<sup>45</sup>

### The Heroic Quality

However, the texts in question are more concerned with a certain distinguishing quality of the hero. This idea of a heroic quality has been taken from Boeclerus, whom the dissertations quote. He follows Aristotle in saying that heroic virtue is indeed a particular virtue in the highest degree, and that consequently the difference between heroic and common virtue is a difference in degree and not in kind. However, the classical virtues are not enough. A hero must also be blessed with gifts of "nature and fortune".<sup>46</sup> The heroes of antiquity were "[...] by god gifted with an unusual and almost unique and marvelous greatness of talent, and further equipped with a swiftness in the most important arts, and they were destined to carry out important and public duties [...]".<sup>47</sup>

43 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 41.

44 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 2–6.

45 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 4, 6–7, 10–11, Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 4–5.

46 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 5–6.

47 "inuitata, & prorsus singulari atque admirabili magnitudine ingenii divinitus donatos, artiumque praecipuarum expedita celeritate adornatos, & ad summarum publicarumque rerum effectiorem destinatos", Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 3, Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 7; Johann Heinrich Boeclerus, *Characteres politici in Velleio Paterculo* (Strasbourg, 1672), 17 (the 1672 edition lacks proper pagination). The wording shows slight variations in the two dissertations.

Different authors have used the term hero to designate many different kinds of people who were prominent and useful to society in various ways, Norcopensis/Clewberg continue. Learned men, religious leaders and many others have sometimes been called heroes. These are however better called “heroic men”, they argue, following Boeclerus. The title ‘hero’ should be reserved for those men who are universally and without controversy considered to have been heroes. What distinguishes heroes from heroic men is that whereas the latter excel in one particular virtue, the former show greatness in all that they do. And as heroes are men who are useful to society, it follows that true heroes are excellent in the arts of both war and peace, while heroic men, such as Cicero, Cato, Lysurgus, or Pompey were prominent only in one or the other.<sup>48</sup> Proper heroes are both political leaders and military commanders, in other words. Following this distinction, a limited number of great kings, princes and generals figure as examples in the dissertations: first and most importantly Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, secondly, a selection of famous men of classical and biblical history, and some modern examples, most prominent of whom are the Swedish kings, Gustav I, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles X, Charles XI and Charles XII.

The particular heroic talent is a natural gift, as opposed to the virtues, which are acquired by training and habit. This talent is obviously very rare. It is compared to gold and precious stones, with which God has adorned creation.<sup>49</sup> The heroic talent is described using many different words, but it is clear that one particular quality is meant. In essence, it is swiftness in thought and action. It is described as prudence or practical wisdom (*prudentia*) in difficult matters or alacrity, liveliness (*alacritas*). Again, with reference to Boeclerus, we are told that heroes are characterized by a vigour thanks to which undertakings that would exhaust a normal man are accomplished effortlessly. This vigour and alacrity is always combined with a “[...] great swiftness of thought, decision, and action, and capacity for effective foresight [...]”.<sup>50</sup>

48 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 12. Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 5–7, 8–9, 10, 20. Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 11–12. Boeclerus, *Characteres politici*, v9.

49 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 16 (by misprint this page is numbered ‘17’). Describing a king’s virtues as precious stones was a common metaphor in the mirror for princes genre from the Middle Ages or earlier, Maurizio Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State: The Acquisition of the Language of Politics 1250–1600*, Ideas in Context, 22 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 21.

50 “[...] cogitandi, iudicandi, agendi summa celeritas, & expedita divinandi facultas [...]”, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 30–32; Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 5–6, 41. Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 1–2, 8.

Even though it is clearly a matter of both thought and action, the mental capacity is the important one, for “[...] swiftmess in action follows from promptness of soul [...]”, as in Caesar, Alexander and Hannibal.<sup>51</sup> Alexander is perhaps the most emblematic example. Heroes accomplish what they strive for in one swift stroke, as Alexander did when he cut the Gordian knot, “[...] hereby they either cut off or dissolve the controversies of peace and the difficulties of war [...]”.<sup>52</sup> The cutting of the Gordian knot was often used when praising the Caroline kings, both in literary<sup>53</sup> and pictorial representations. In particular, two medals were struck in celebration of the defeat of Denmark at the battle of Lund on December 4, 1676. One medal portrays the Gordian knot with the motto *facile rumpitur* together with the tetragrammaton to be read as “[it is] easily cut [with the aid of God]”. The other medal shows the king himself wearing a helmet reminiscent of the two-horned helmet traditionally associated with Alexander<sup>54</sup> on the obverse and a battle scene on the reverse, with a representation of Jupiter/God reaching down to protect the Swedish crown in the center.<sup>55</sup> The figure of Alexander cutting the Gordian knot was of course ideal as a symbol of Swedish absolutism generally, not merely as a celebration of military success. The introduction of absolute rule and the so-called reduction (the large-scale confiscation of former crown lands donated to the nobility by earlier monarchs) lent itself well to such a comparison. It must have been easy for seventeenth-century Swedes to read the classical symbolism in the light of current events. Through these forceful and decisive measures the internal divisions in Swedish society were dissolved in one swift stroke.

Heroes are also distinguished by a certain dignity, which makes their souls seem to breathe, shine and sparkle, according to the dissertations. This terrifying dignity could be seen especially in the glimmering eyes of the three above-mentioned heroes. The reason for all this is a certain heat in their souls, which gave life to their actions. This fiery energy in their character is called *vis ignea*

51 “[...] namque promptitudinem animi sequitur celeritas in agendo [...]”, Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 42.

52 “Haec pacis controversias, belli perplexitates aut dirimunt aut solvunt”, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 72.

53 Hellerstedt, *Ödets teater*, 146.

54 Andrew Runni Anderson, “Alexander’s Horns,” in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 58 (1927), 100–122.

55 The medals can be found in Elias Brenner, *Thesaurus nummorum sveo-gothicorum* [...] (Holmia, 1731), 216 (plate “CAR. XI. TAB. IV.”).

and *igneae velocitas*, which makes them appear “as if they burned” (*accendantur quasi*) to carry through their plans.<sup>56</sup>

This quality is especially important in war. War is an exceedingly difficult enterprise; one must create fortifications, equip soldiers, calculate the necessary proportions of infantry and cavalry, decide the advantageous time and place to attack the enemy, and so on. Moreover, the “dice of war” often fall randomly, and a commander always runs the risk of being caught by the unexpected.<sup>57</sup> The skill of the hero can be divided in two parts: to correctly and quickly assess the present, and then to successfully predict the future. It is a common error in human beings only to see the surface of things, without grasping the causes and reasons beneath them. Epaminondas said that no quality was more worthy of praise in a commander than to be able to predict the plans of his enemy. The hero accomplishes this in virtue of his “incredible swiftness, through which heroic characters can immerse their sharp eyes in the nature and causes of events.” With a single glance, they see what ordinary men only perceive after laborious and time consuming study and analysis.<sup>58</sup> A competent commander can also anticipate deception, such as the famous Trojan horse, “if he is gifted with heroic prudence, reason, and counsel” (“*si Heroica instructus prudentia, ratione & consilio*”), the proper qualities of a leader.<sup>59</sup>

Such then are the characteristic qualities of the hero. But how does one acquire them? Some advice is provided on the education of heroes (that is, the princes). Hunting trains them for war in Xenophon's view, and he calls hunting a gift of the gods, given to Chiron and from him in turn to heroes. But it is also necessary to gain personal experience, since war is a science (*scientia bellandi*) that cannot be learnt solely from what one hears from others.<sup>60</sup> Excellent human talent (*ingenium*) must, however, be considered divine, a gift granted to human beings that sets them apart from other animals. This talent is not distributed equally among men.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, then, this heroic quality is primarily something that is given to us as part of our nature, rather than as something we acquire through training or education.

56 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 40, Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 6–7, 26–29, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 30, 67–68, 73. Boeclerus, *Characteres politici*, r25–r26.

57 Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 9–10, 29–32.

58 “celeritas ista incredibilis, qua Heroica ingenia velocissime possunt in naturam caussasque negotiorum perspicaces immergere oculos”, Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 16–19, 22–25, quote on p. 18; Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 69–70.

59 Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 25–26.

60 Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 39–40.

61 Forelius/Barchius, *De Indole Heroica*, 1–2.

## The Morality of Heroism

There is something rather mysterious about the actions of heroes. Ordinary men are incapable of understanding the immense power (*impetus*) in their actions. They mistake them for pure recklessness and thoughtlessness, whereas their power is in fact always coupled with prudence. As we have seen, their swiftness of mind makes them capable of perceiving things that are obscure to others. In fact God secretly directs them to achieve great things for purposes that are hidden from the vulgar.<sup>62</sup> From this it also follows that heroes must be judged by different standards. God equipped them with the ability to perceive secrets, because he knows all that is hidden. Among other things, heroes can gain an insight into the secret “periods” after which the fortunes of states rise and fall, according to the government of God’s providence.<sup>63</sup>

The actions of those, who are truly deserving of the title of hero, should not be judged according to the common norm: for what seems to others a blind audacity, often turns out to spring from a certain firm and immutable conviction of the mind.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, they should not be judged at all, just like Melanchthon had argued. Their actions depend on higher causes, which we cannot or must not investigate: “it is proper to praise them, not to judge them.”<sup>65</sup> It also follows from this that heroes must not be imitated by anyone but other heroes, as their gifts so far surpass those of common men to make this impossible and dangerous. Norcopensis/Clewberg follow Boeclerus in quoting Nazarius, who in his panegyric of the emperor Constantine says, that it is improper to judge princes, for he who stares into the sun will soon lose his sight.<sup>66</sup> As they are directed by providence, it is often difficult to judge them before the outcome is known. Significantly, the separation of political from private morality is sanctioned with reference to God’s inscrutable providence. In effect, reason of state is equated with divine wisdom. Man must not think himself wise enough to

62 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 42–43.

63 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 18, 71–72.

64 “[...] eorum, qui nomen Herois vere merentur, facta ad communem regulam non sunt examinanda; nam quae aliis ex coeca audacia profecta videntur, ex firma quadam & immota mentis fiducia provenisse saepe compertum est.” Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 43.

65 “laudare licet, judicare non licet.” Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 44.

66 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 54; Boeclerus, *Characteres politici*, 116.

question providence, whose secrets are like the *arcana* of *ratio status*, which does not always benefit from that which is joyous (*laeta*), and is not always harmed by that which is bad (*tristia*), as Boeclerus says.<sup>67</sup>

The doctrine of heroic excellence taught at Uppsala in the late seventeenth century is placed within the framework of a Lutheran humanist philosophy of history. History is viewed as both linear and cyclical, both Christian and classical. God directs the political fortunes of the world and he affects the rise and fall of nations. The four world monarchies have followed one another in cycles of birth, flowering and decay. Within this vision of world history, heroes play the role of God's tools. He has destined them to rule states to their fates. Through secondary causes, God excites in them the quick movement of body and mind, the power and talent that is characteristic of heroes. It is significant that this is caused by secondary (that is, natural) causes, and not by miraculous divine intervention. It is not only Christian heroes that are God's instrument, so too were the ancient pagan heroes. Thus God used Cyrus to protect the Jewish people, Alexander to punish the Persians when they had degenerated into vice, Scipio to destroy Carthage, Caesar and Augustus so that the Romans could take the place of the Greeks when their power had run its course.<sup>68</sup>

### The Virtues

Even though heroic virtue is not the most important theme in these dissertations, the classical virtues are still relevant to describe the heroic qualities. As heroes by definition excel in all areas, it follows that they must possess all the virtues.<sup>69</sup> The Christian virtue of piety is also central to a hero. Piety is however a slightly broader term in this context than was usual in seventeenth-century Sweden, as pagans can be considered pious as well, insofar as they, like Alexander, held that success comes because of the gods, and that the world is providentially governed. An atheist on the other hand, could never be considered a hero.<sup>70</sup> Although practical for the political humanist, this solution to the problem was not universal in seventeenth-century Sweden.

67 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 53.

68 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 16–18, 39–41, 50–51; Boeclerus, *Characteres politici*, v7. On the cyclical theory in late humanism generally, see Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 118–135; in Sweden, Hellerstedt, *Ödets teater*, 65–111.

69 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 10, 20, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 44.

70 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 11–12, 45–46.



An interesting comparison can be found in the Swedish translation of Roman historian Curtius Rufus's *History of Alexander*, which was commissioned by Charles XI. In a dedicatory epistle, the translator gives his views on the appropriateness of using Alexander as an example to young Christians. As in the dissertations, Alexander is placed within the Christian scheme of history. However, Alexander was a blind heathen who asked advice from the "spirit of lies himself, Satan", when he visited pagan oracles.<sup>71</sup> His virtues were great—clemency, prudence, justice, fortitude, a capacity to endure endless hardship, frugality and a contempt for luxury. But the virtues of Alexander "[...] are and are called Virtutes Ethnicae or pagan virtues: as such they are nonetheless not to be discarded, but are such a gift of God and nature as his divine providence has left in each man in his soul, per Lumen Naturae, or the light of nature, and in such capacity so that he is able to perform many good deeds in this world [...]"<sup>72</sup>

This worldly virtue did not last. Alexander was corrupted by his good fortune. He was a pious king, a skilled commander, and a great statesman "until the day the glory of a persistent Fortune began to attack and sting him so much, that he wished to be called the son of a God, to be honored as a God, and to lay the whole world under his dominion." At this point, he and the morals of his native country changed. He "fell into grave vice", and with time became "a horrible sodomite".<sup>73</sup>

Despite his failings, Alexander is still a great example of virtue. In fact, his faults only serve to make his history more edifying. What is amazing about Alexander is that he led such an exemplary life, in spite of the fact that he was not a Christian.<sup>74</sup> If he, who had not seen the light, possessed all these

71 Quintus Curtius Rufus, *Historiske Skrifter och Sann färdige Berättelser Om Konungens aff Macedonien Alexandri Then Stores/ Förde Krijg och wijdtbekant [sic!] Gärningar. Verterade på Swenske Språket aff Johan Sylvio Transl. Regio* (Stockholm, 1682), dedicatory epistle, v2–r2.

72 "[...] äre och kallas Virtutes Ethnicae eller Hedniske dygder: Så äre the lijkwäl intet förkastandes/ uthan een sådan gåfwa aff Gudh och Naturen/ som hans Guddommelige försyn hafwer lämnat hoos hwar och een Menniskia uthi hennes Siäl per Lumen Naturae eller Naturens lius behållen/ och uthi thet stånd/ at han uthaff en sådan grundh kan här i Werlden uthföra många goda gärningar [...]", Curtius, *Historiske Skrifter*, dedicatory epistle, r4.

73 "alt in til then tijdh ähran aff een framhärdeligh Lycka begynte honom så högt sticka och anfächta/ at han wille kallas wara en Guda Son/ hedras såsom en Gudh/ och lägga under sin Regering hela Werlden." "föll uthi swåra laster", "en faselig Sodomit", Curtius, *Historiske Skrifter*, dedicatory epistle, r5.

74 Curtius, *Historiske Skrifter*, dedicatory epistle, r2.

virtues, what was there that a Christian king would not be able to achieve? Interestingly, it is for this reason that the translator wishes to reserve the title 'hero' for Christians, and presents Charles XI as such a true hero.<sup>75</sup> As we have seen, this view is diametrically opposed to that of Boeclerus and the dissertations from Uppsala, according to whom Alexander is the greatest example of a hero in history.

Justice is the second virtue following piety, according to Upmarck/Palmstierna. The man who acts against justice is so far from being a hero that he does not even deserve to be called a human being. To seek private gain and not the common good is inhuman.<sup>76</sup> The hero is furthermore characterized by temperance. He should abstain from excesses in drink, sex and so on. As long as Alexander held his lust within natural limits, he was respected and loved, and as long as the Romans were temperate, they ruled the world: "but with growing luxury, glory began to die."<sup>77</sup>

It is also natural that the stoic view on *nexus virtutum*, which maintains that all virtues are linked so that if you have one, you have them all, is criticized here. The virtues of heroes are many, but that does not mean that they are connected. It would also be a mistake to claim that one who broke a moral rule once would thereby cease to be a hero, and a man once called a hero might of course degenerate, as did Alexander.<sup>78</sup> Even though the classical virtues have their place in these discussions of heroes, heroes are never unambiguous moral examples. In fact, heroes can use their great abilities for both good and evil purposes, according to Boeclerus.<sup>79</sup> Sometimes they commit great crimes and abuse their gifts, and the greater they are, the graver the consequences.<sup>80</sup>

### The Prudent Hero

Among the classical virtues, prudence (practical wisdom) is the most important in these texts. In fact, the descriptions of the heroic quality as swiftness in thought and action that we have seen above are very similar to then current

75 Curtius, *Historiske Skrifter*, dedicatory epistle, r2, v6–v7.

76 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 13.

77 "Sed crescente Luxuria, denasci coepit gloria." Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 15–17, 30–31, 42, quote at p. 16.

78 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 55–62.

79 Boeclerus, *Characteres politici*, vii–r12.

80 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 62–64, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 47–48, 52.

descriptions of the virtue of prudence. In political emblems, prudence was portrayed as a three-headed figure (or sometimes a two-headed Janus figure), representing the past, the present and the future, similar to the way the heroic talent was described as the capacity to predict the future through understanding the past and present.<sup>81</sup> Theoretical studies are also important for heroic greatness, but definitely secondary in importance compared to practical wisdom: Lipsius is quoted as saying that philosophy teaches us to act, not to speak. A hero need not necessarily be a learned man himself, as his duties seldom allow it; but he is not a true hero if he is not a protector and benefactor of learning and education.<sup>82</sup>

The virtue of prudence is, according to Upmarck/Palmstierna, similar to temperance in that it must be used in all manner of actions. And it is a virtue that heroes in particular possess, due to their swiftness of thought and promptness in decision-making. Like the sailor, who in calm weather prepares for a coming storm, the great man always contemplates not only his present fortunes, but also what the future will bring. Since prudence must guide all action, so all other virtues must be led by it. A hero must, for instance, be brave. But a prudent military commander does not expose himself to danger without good cause. In fact, he takes all possible precautions before entering the battlefield, and as heroes often understand the situation better than others, it might in some instances seem that he is fleeing, when he has reason to believe that a retreat is the best option, as in the famous case of the Roman general, Fabius Maximus 'Cunctator'.<sup>83</sup>

An important part of contemporary discussions of the virtue of prudence was the problem of dissimulation. The issue had been given a decisive stimulus through Machiavelli, but no one in seventeenth-century Sweden was prepared to support his position wholeheartedly. Justus Lipsius's view is more representative of how the problem was perceived. Lipsius quoted Augustine saying that some lies are not great crimes. He argued that Machiavelli had gone too far, but that dissimulation was necessary in some cases. Lipsius made an important distinction in separating prudence from virtue (by which he meant piety (*pietas*) and honesty (*probitas*)). Prudence becomes simply the ability to understand and choose how to act in political matters. In Lipsius, Prudence may be somewhat 'tempered' with fraud, which in turn could be categorized as *fraus*

81 See for instance, Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart & Weimar: Metzler, 1996 [1967]), 1818, Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 52–53.

82 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 31–33.

83 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 18–19, 34, 36–37.

*levis*, *fraus media* or *fraus magna* (light, medium or great fraud).<sup>84</sup> Lipsism, as it is known, was widespread in Europe during the seventeenth century, and had many adherents in Sweden as well.<sup>85</sup> The Strasbourg humanists followed Lipsius. Bernegger used his *Politica* as a textbook in Strasbourg; Freinsheimius prepared a new edition of it in 1641, and Boeclerus published a commentary on the text. The *professor skytteanus* at Uppsala used the book as the basis for a series of dissertations as early as 1624. A Swedish translation by Per Brahe survives in an unfinished manuscript dating from the 1660s or 1670s. However, Boeclerus criticized Lipsius's view that prudence might be mixed with a small portion of fraud, and claimed that Cicero had been right in insisting that *utile* and *honestum* never conflict.<sup>86</sup> The problem is taken up in the dissertations. A hero must, according to some, hold on tightly to *fides* and must not be fraudulent, because, as Cicero says, "est enim fides [...] fundamentum justitiae [...]".<sup>87</sup> Heroes are distinguished from political "sophists" and "statists" (proponents of *raison d'état*), who are faithless, skilled at deception and driven only by personal interest. In true heroes, *rationes status* are always led by virtue, conscience and concern for the common good.<sup>88</sup>

But Cicero went too far, Upmarck/Palmstierna claim (with reference to Grotius and Baltasar Gracián). Augustine claimed that "it is allowed to hide the truth behind some dissimulation" ("Licet [...] veritatem occultare sub aliqua dissimulatione"). Cicero himself used a well-known *astutia* against his enemy, Catilina, but nowhere did he admit that *dissimulatio* is sometimes necessary for politicians.<sup>89</sup>

### The Heroic Temperament

It has been made clear that heroes, in the eyes of seventeenth-century Swedish academics, are distinguished by certain character traits that are not synonymous with the classical cardinal virtues or the Christian virtues. The

84 Lars Gustafsson, *Virtus Politica: Politisk etik och nationellt svärmeri i den tidigare stormakts-tidens litteratur*, Lychnos-bibliotek, 15 (diss. Uppsala, 1956) 28–30. Bo Lindberg, *Stoicism och stat: Justus Lipsius och den politiska humanismen* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2001), 105–106, 114–115.

85 Lars Gustafsson, *Virtus Politica*, 51–52.

86 Runeby, *Monarchia Mixta*, 354–355, Lindberg, *Stoicism och stat*, 195, 205–213, 228–244.

87 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 25–27; quote p. 26.

88 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 47.

89 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 28.

relationship between these traits and the virtues is not entirely clear. Perhaps what the authors have in mind is something akin to the system proposed by Lipsius, where prudence and virtue are separated. In any event, the heroic *ingenium* or *indoles* is an innate quality, a gift given through God and nature.

It is strongly implied already by what has been said thus far that this *ingenium* is a result of a particular temperament, that is, the constitution of the hero's physical body and mind. As we have seen, their fast moving intellect is a result of a fiery power and a heat in the soul, pointing to a connection with the elements fire and air. This humoral explanation of human character was commonplace in the seventeenth century, and its origins are, of course, much older. The *Characteres* of Boeclerus, the main source for the concept of the hero to be found in the seventeenth-century dissertations, was a commentary on the Roman historian, Velleius Paterculus, but it is also an imitation of the *Characters* of Theophrastus, Aristotle's disciple, although the contents differ widely. Ideas about human temperament and character such as these were everywhere in seventeenth-century learned discourse. For instance, it is known that Bernegger knew and used Juan Huarte's *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575; saw many editions and translations in the seventeenth century), in which the Spanish physician argued for specialization in the sciences based upon individual temperament.<sup>90</sup> Influential political writers such as Jean Bodin and John Barclay discussed the role of temperament and climate in forming national characters and their effect on politics.<sup>91</sup>

So, that which above all else makes a hero is "a singular bodily temperament, which in heroes is optimal."<sup>92</sup> In this heroic temperament, all qualities construct such equilibrium and such proportion so that one does not dominate the other. Nor is one oppressed by another, so it is as if they are not opposites, and are not naturally antagonistic. From this it follows, according to Norcopenensis/Clewberg, that heroic souls are fit for any task. But not only does it result in those intellectual qualities resembling a superhuman prudence, it

90 Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 340–341.

91 A well-known example is Jean Bodin, *De repvblica libri sex* (Lugdunum, 1586), book 1, chapter 1; John Barclay discusses the particular temperaments and *ingenia* of different nations, political classes and individuals at great length in *Icon animorum*, pars IV of the novel *Euphormio; Euphormionis Lusinini Sive Jo. Barclaii Satyricon* [...] (Lugdunum Batavorum, 1674); it is quoted repeatedly in Norcopenensis/Forelius, *Gubernacula*. Lipsius's *Politica*, IV:5, includes a similar section on the importance of the prince knowing the nature of his people; Justus Lipsius, *Politica: Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, ed. and transl. by Jan Waszink, Bibliotheca Latinitatis Novae, 5 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004).

92 "[...] singulare corporis temperamentum, quod in heroibus est optimum." Norcopenensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 26.

even makes the smell that emanates from their mouths pleasant, it makes their bodies beautiful and their mood happy.<sup>93</sup> Alexander the Great was gifted with this kind of optimal temperament, and his perfectly proportioned body did indeed emit a pleasant smell. Through constant exercise he preserved this balanced temperament. And because he was born beautiful, he refused to adorn himself with jewelry, as this would have made him effeminate.<sup>94</sup> However, the exact relationship between the temperament, heroic *ingenium* and the virtues remains unclear. It is not quite explained by the statement that the temperament is “an instrumental and contributing cause” to the virtues, particularly the heroic virtues, whereas the soul is “the prime and principal cause”.<sup>95</sup> It is also claimed that many with bodies that are deformed are heroes in the soul.<sup>96</sup>

The weight given to this temperamental explanation of the heroic character would seem to lend itself to determinism of various forms. If the temperament makes the hero, is he not destined for greatness from birth? Are heroic temperaments caused by the influence of the stars? More generally, is it not an argument for an hereditary aristocracy? The stars affect the temperament of the heroes, according to the dissertations, but so too do food and drink, the temperament of their parents, and many other things. The stars do not cause heroes to be born, God does. Astrology is rejected as a vain science and an art of conjecture.<sup>97</sup> There are certain signs by which man can foretell the future, such as the ring formed as a lion that was seen on the belly of Olympias when she carried Alexander. Alexander's birth was surrounded by many omina, which caused Philip to take particular care of his upbringing and education. However, such signs are difficult to interpret, and one must be careful not to give too much credence to them.<sup>98</sup>

Nor is it certain that heroes are born out of ancient lineages. On the contrary, even those born *vitiose* rise to greatness. God loves to raise the humble, and throw down the mighty. Norcopensis/Clewberg even claim that secret love makes *congressus* so much stronger that illegitimate children often become

93 “Optima enim temperies [...] non corpori solum, verum etiam intelligentiae hominis prodest.” Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 27.

94 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 28.

95 “ex temperamento corporis, tanquam causa instrumentalis & adjuvante, ab anima vero pendere tanquam a causa prima & principali.” Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 28.

96 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 67–68.

97 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 47–48, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 59–60.

98 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 61–63.

heroes. It also happens that a shameful birth spurs men on to virtue.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, God often shows certain families a particular favour, but it also happens that children of prominent parents grow up to be useless. A story told of the Emperor Augustus in Suetonius is used to illustrate this. Augustus showed exactly that swiftness of thought and action that marks a true hero. His children, however, were so degenerate that he himself called them his three cancers. Who does not know that the worst sons can be begotten of the best fathers, just like the human body can bring forth worms and snakes?<sup>100</sup>

This leads on to the question of whether women can be heroes. This is affirmed, although it is stated that this happens less often.<sup>101</sup> Norcopensis/Clewberg argue that women should not be completely excluded from heroic virtue, as there are women who equal men in soul and affectations, and are educated to such virtues as to surpass them. If nature makes woman swift in thought, industry makes her learned, education makes her pious, and experience makes her wise; why is she not also a heroine? Aristotle denied heroic virtue in the female sex; but the nature of the female sex can be considered in two ways, argue Norcopensis/Clewberg. Ordinarily, it is inferior because of the cold and moist temperament that makes women easily moved and unreliable. Heroic virtue is a well-tempered talent, and often demands fire and sharpness. Nature can thus only in extraordinary circumstances give women such abilities, just as God sometimes endows the lowly born or bastards with them.<sup>102</sup>

Heroism is not determined beforehand in anyone, because an individual temperament is not stable or unchanging. For that reason, a well-proportioned temperament must be maintained through a certain lifestyle, or man will degenerate and decay physically and morally. The body and soul must be hardened and not, like Sardanapalus, wallow in luxury and pleasure. Through physical exercise, the body is hardened to endure difficult undertakings. The gifts of nature are strengthened by discipline and perfected and maintained in action. So it was that Achilles said he learned simple honest ways from the good man, Chiron.<sup>103</sup> Training and education is, in other words, important, although it is difficult to determine exactly how important.

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99 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 66–67.

100 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 21–22, 24.

101 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 68–69.

102 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 23–24.

103 Upmarck/Palmstierna, *De Vera Animi Magnitudine*, 37–38, 41, Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 32–39.



## Conclusion

In general terms the idea of the all-perceiving heroic intellect serves to legitimize a myth of absolute monarchy. In practice, it was certainly impossible for a single ruler to control every decision in an Early Modern military state, although that only made it more important to present a façade of superhuman reason, foresight and control. In this sense, the hero can be seen as an important part of the 'myth of absolutism'. This myth was already very old. From at least the Middle Ages, it was claimed that monarchs possessed unique, exclusive abilities and God-given insights into the mystery that was politics.<sup>104</sup> But it is also possible to be more specific regarding the uses of the hero in Sweden around 1700. In the service of the absolutist state, he represents above all two things: *ratio status* and *arcana rerumpublicarum*, two dominant concepts in seventeenth-century statecraft, coined by Giovanni Botero and Arnold Clapmarius respectively. These concepts were developed in explicit dialogue with, and often in direct opposition to, Machiavelli, who never used the terms himself.<sup>105</sup> The image of the hero could solve the Machiavellian problem: in the words of Martin Disselkamp, the heroic could function as an alternative in which it was possible to unite "die Ideen höchster Handlungssuveränitet und absoluter Tugendhaftigkeit [...]", which could portray the absolute ruler as the personification of the common good, and still allow room for a sufficiently flexible political morality. Through *gravitas* and *gratia* the hero was part of an effort to compensate for the loss of legitimacy in the age of 'interest'. The loss of traditional legitimacy is evident not least in the rejection of the hereditary principle in the dissertations, reflecting a general tendency to reduce the function of genealogy to legitimation in the seventeenth century.<sup>106</sup> The turn from Aristotelian virtue towards prudence as *ingenium* also reflects the differences between Lipsian and Aristotelian treatments of politics: the former was an art, while the latter was a science. Lipsius was successful precisely because his *Politica* was an art of statecraft, putting *prudentia* at the centre of attention.<sup>107</sup>

104 Burke, *The Fabrication*, 61–64, Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism*, 16, 24, 36–37, 82, 104.

105 Bo Lindberg, *Den antika skevheten: Politiska ord och begrepp i det tidig-moderna Sverige*, Filologiskt arkiv 45 (Stockholm: Kungl. vitterhets- historie och antikvitetsakademien, 2006) 23, 82–83, Peter S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 39, 87–90, 112–113, 115, 123, Bo Lindberg, "Statsräson och moral", in *Förmoderna livshållningar: Dygder, värden och kunskapsvägar från antiken till upplysningen*, Marie Lindstedt Cronberg and Catharina Stenqvist (eds.), (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2008) 141–142.

106 Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 20–21, 83ff, 105ff, 124, 186–187, 207, 249, quote at 186–187.

107 Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 51–52.

As Maurizio Viroli has argued, this was a major shift in political thinking, as prudence lost the intimate connection to justice that it had had in the Middle Ages.<sup>108</sup> In the late fifteenth century, Marsilio Ficino distinguished between *ingenium* and *virtus*. The first he saw as a gift from God, the second as something one develops through training and education, and therefore, he claimed, a man should not be praised for his *ingenium*, but for his *virtus*.<sup>109</sup> Apparently, this was not the position taken by the dissertations analysed in this article.

Soon enough, this use of the hero came under heavy criticism. To many Enlightenment thinkers, the hero was a negative figure. An early example of this is Richard Steele's *Christian Hero* (1701), attacking pagan stoicism and false heroism as nothing but a polished surface hiding ambition, Machiavellianism and tyranny. For Steele, the humble Christian is the real hero.<sup>110</sup> Closer to a Swedish context was Voltaire's *History of Charles XII* (1731), in which the last absolute monarch of Sweden is portrayed as a man who possessed every possible virtue, but all of them in excess, to the great detriment of his country. According to Burke, the great investments in the "heroic image" of Louis XIV were in themselves symptoms of a larger "crisis of representations", foreshadowing the ultimate decline in the use of classical imagery and mythology for the purposes of royal image-making. In the billiard ball universe of Descartes and Newton, the secret correspondence between contemporary politics and classical history was losing credibility, and the monarchies of Europe were losing a vital symbolic capital.<sup>111</sup>

Even though education does not feature very prominently in the texts that have been studied here, they can nonetheless tell us something about views of education. Kühlmann has noted how the education of statesmen, courtiers, and humanists converged in the seventeenth century. They were all centered on utility, and closely tied to serving the state.<sup>112</sup> Norcopensis/Clewberg strongly imply that they (and, presumably, their readers) may accomplish what heroes do through the study of history. The particular heroic *ingenium* consists in the ability to predict the future through knowledge of the past and present, which is exactly what the learned humanist is aiming at.<sup>113</sup> Indirectly,

108 Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State*, 4, 9, 27.

109 Anthony J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 90.

110 Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 10. Criticism of a similar kind can be found earlier, for instance in Milton, John M. Steadman, *Milton and the Renaissance Hero* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), in particular 78, 80, 83, 106–107.

111 Burke *The Fabrication*, 126–132.

112 Kühlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 97–99, 351–365.

113 Norcopensis/Clewberg, *Character Heroum*, 12–13.

then, the dissertations are arguing that kings and princes should study history, or at least, employ men who have. Interestingly, the words describing the skilled humanist in the rhetorical theories of Lipsius and his followers are similar to those describing the hero's abilities. The Lipsian humanist should possess *ingenium* in finding new, striking and insightful uses for the matter found in classical texts, not merely the *judicium* in copying the right passages that Ciceronians stressed. He values traits such as *argutia* or *acutezza*, *acumen* and so on. The rhetorical style was closely connected to the political practice. In a mid seventeenth-century courtier's manual, it is claimed that through the study of Tacitus, it is possible to develop a reason as sharp as the Roman historian's Latin style. Furthermore, in rhetoric as in politics, silence and dissimulation were central, reflecting the political climate. The short, almost obscure, Latin style of Tacitean *brevitas* was appropriate for the majesty of princes; in short, it was the language of power.<sup>114</sup>

The descriptions of heroic *ingenium* are strikingly similar to contemporary characterizations of Machiavellian politicians, or even Machiavelli himself, as when Gabriel Naudé and other French free-thinkers claimed that politics demanded "esprits forts", strong spirits who know how to make good use of *arcana*, thereby shaping their own fortune. Arnold Clapmarius called Machiavelli an "acutus scriptor", conceding that he was sharp, although he was not very pious.<sup>115</sup> Most clearly, however, this is expressed by Justus Lipsius, on the subject of modern political writers, of whom most, in his view, are worth little: "With the exception of one, Machiavelli, whose genius I do not despise, sharp, subtle, and fiery as it is; and if he had only directed his Prince on the straight path towards that great temple of Virtue and Honour!"<sup>116</sup>

As a conclusion, attention must be drawn to Machiavelli's own views on the heroic temperament. In chapter 25 of *The Prince*, he argues that the man who can adapt himself to "the nature of the times" will succeed. However, he also suggests that, in practice, no one is capable of doing this, as men always act according to their temperament. At one moment the cautious man is successful, at the other, the impetuous man is, but none of them is successful at all times. Because nature disposes them to act in particular ways, and because they are disinclined to change their ways if they have been successful in the

114 Köhlmann, *Gelehrtenrepublik und Fürstenstaat*, 207, 228–230, 235–237, 240–243, 243–251, 258; Disselkamp, *Barockheroismus*, 21.

115 Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State*, 176–180, 183–185, 133, 137.

116 "Nisi quod unius tamen Machiavelli ingenium non contemno, acre, subtile, igneum: et qui utinam Principem suum recta duxisset ad templum illud Virtutis et Honoris!", Lipsius, *Politica*, 230–231.

past, men do not change, and thus Fortune does not last. Concluding the discussion, Machiavelli states that, in his opinion, it is better to be impetuous than cautious, as Fortune favours those who are young and bold, rather than those who “proceed coldly”.<sup>117</sup> The impetuous character recommended by Machiavelli has been identified as the choleric temperament of Galenic theory.<sup>118</sup> The temperament described as heroic in the dissertations discussed here was not that of Machiavelli’s impetuous young man, but it was nonetheless based on a theory in which, like in Machiavelli, a man’s temperament was more important than his moral qualities. In general terms, the representations of heroes illustrate how the seventeenth-century reception of Machiavelli was ambiguous. On the one hand, the majority of writers rejected the teachings of *Il Principe* as immoral. On the other hand, the tendency as the century progressed was for increased stress on dissimulation, *ratio status* and absolute power. In this development, classical heroes (as political *exempla*) were of central importance.

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<sup>117</sup> Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, 91–92.

<sup>118</sup> Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos*, 78–84, 89, 98.

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# The Enlightened Hero: Virtue, Magnanimitas and Glory in Panegyric Poetry on Gustavus III 1771–1792

Jennie Nell

The virtuous man is just, prudent, moderate without being a Hero on that account, and too frequently the Hero is none of those things. Let us not be afraid to agree about it: often it is even to the scorn of these virtues that Heroism has owed its brilliance. [—]

Just as one can perform actions of virtue without being virtuous, one can perform great actions without having the right to Heroism. The Hero does not always perform great actions; but he is always ready to do so if needed and shows himself to be great in all the circumstances of his life. That is what distinguishes him from the ordinary man.<sup>1</sup>

In 1751, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) in his *Discourse on This Question: Which is the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero and Which are the Heroes that Lacked This Virtue? Proposed in 1751 by the Academy of Corsica* (*Discours sur cette question, proposée par l'Académie de Corse, Quelle est la vertu plus nécessaire aux héros, et quels sont les héros à qui cette vertu a manqué?*) discussed the heroic and the question of which virtue is the most heroic. It had long been at the core of the education of the élite in Europe, and during the eighteenth century, it also became a part of the education of the citizen. Many of the prominent men of letters discussed heroic honour and the necessity of the cult of great men for an orderly and exemplary society. It was believed that all men from all walks of life needed proper examples, which led to a “democratization of honour” as the literary scholar Sven Delblanc puts it. Great men’s *exempla*, it

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1 “Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero,” trans. Christopher Kelly, in *Rousseau on Philosophy, Morality, and Religion*, Christopher Kelly (ed.), (New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2007), 40–41. In French: “L’homme vertueux est juste, prudent, modéré, sans être pour tout cela un héros; et trop fréquemment le héros n’est rien de tout cela. Ne craignons point d’en convenir; c’est souvent au mépris même de ces vertus que l’héroïsme a dû son éclat.[—] Comme un peut faire des actions de vertu sans être vertueux, on peut faire de grandes actions sans avoir droit à l’héroïsme. Le héros ne fait toujours de grandes actions; mais il est toujours prêt à en faire au besoin, et se montre grand dans toutes les circonstances de sa vie: voilà ce qui le distingue de l’homme vulgaire”. *Oeuvres Complètes de J.J. Rousseau, Avec Des Notes Historiques par G. Petitain*, Tome IV, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1853), 97–98.

was argued, could and should be found in all classes. It was believed that the great man should act as a virtuous and moral example for the citizens.<sup>2</sup>

The thinkers of the eighteenth century were inspired by the ancient texts to revive the debate on personal ambition and the importance of honour for a well-functioning society. This discussion came into play notably in the education of princes during the Swedish Enlightenment. The basis for the discussions was Aristotle, and the term high mindedness (*μεγαλοψυχία* or *magnanimitas*), formulated in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Ambition is, according to Aristotle, an innate quality in a great man, and ambition for honour is therefore natural.

During the reign of Gustavus III (1746–1792), the cult of great men that had already permeated Swedish society during the Age of Liberty was revived, and conjoined with the idea of the exemplary citizen. The Swedish Enlightenment drew heavily from ancient authors when dealing with subjects such as history, philosophy, ethics, literature and art, predominantly Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Horace and Sallust. Swedish writers were also inspired by historiographers such as Livy and Plutarch, whose texts dealt to a great extent with the mythical Golden Age when great men won fame and honour through virtuous and patriotic deeds. In antiquity, the most important task for biographers and historiographers was to provide moral examples. Thus, the genre of exemplary literature was developed, not only for rhetorical use but also as a means to impart moral education.<sup>3</sup>

Serious discussions on what constituted a great man or a hero flourished in the eighteenth century and incorporated the cardinal virtues, as formulated by Cicero, namely prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. In *De Inventione*, II, 159–160, Cicero explains,

We shall call honourable anything that is sought wholly or partly for its own sake. Now, since it has two divisions, one simple and the other complex, let us consider the simple one first. Everything in this class is embraced in one meaning and under one name, virtue. Virtue may be defined as a habit of mind in harmony with reason and the order of nature. Therefore when we have become acquainted with all its parts we shall have considered the full scope of honour, pure and simple. It has four parts: wisdom, justice, courage, temperance.

<sup>2</sup> Sven Delblanc, *Åra och minne. Studier kring ett idékomplex i 1700-talets litteratur*, (diss. Uppsala University: Stockholm, 1965), 114 et passim.

<sup>3</sup> Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 84–89. Rolf Hillman, *Gustaviansk retorik: Stilstudier i Svenska Akademiens med stora priset belönade äreminnen 1786–1803* (diss. Stockholm University: Stockholm, 1962), 20–22.

Wisdom [prudentia] is the knowledge of what is good, what is bad and what is neither good nor bad. Its parts are memory, intelligence, and foresight. Memory is the faculty by which the mind recalls what has happened. Intelligence is the faculty by which it ascertains what is. Foresight is the faculty by which it is seen that something is going to occur before it occurs. Justice is a habit of mind which gives every man his desert while preserving the common advantage. Its first principles proceed from nature, the certain rules of conduct become customary by reason of their advantage; later still both the principles that proceeded from nature and those that had been approved by custom received the support of religion and the fear of the law.<sup>4</sup>

During the later Enlightenment, the writings of influential authors such as Denis Diderot, Antoine-Léonard Thomas (1732–1785), Voltaire and Rousseau, who all wrote idolizing accounts of great men from antiquity, inspired the view that the ambition for glory was an accepted mark of a great man. In Sweden, the authors Olof von Dalin (1708–1763) and Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (1731–1811) introduced the discussion on ambition and glory onto the literary scene, through their respective writings and newspaper articles.<sup>5</sup>

Although many of the discussions on glory and honour during the Enlightenment follow the traditional patterns established by Aristotle and

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4 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Inventione*, 11:159–160, transl. H.M. Hubbell, in *De Inventione: De Optimo Genere Oratorum: Topica*, Jeffrey Henderson (ed.), (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1949). In Latin: “Quod aut totum aut aliqua ex parte propter se petitur, honestum nominabimus. Quare, cum eius duae partes sint, quarum altera simplex, altera iuncta sit, simplicem prius consideremus. Est igitur in eo genere omnes res una vi atque uno nomine amplexa virtus. Nam virtus est animi habitus naturae modo atque rationi consentaneus. Quamobrem omnibus eius partibus cognitis tota vis erit simplicis honestatis considerata. Habet igitur partes quattuor: prudentiam, iustitiam, fortitudinem, temperantiam.

Prudentia est rerum bonarum et malarum neutrarumque scientia. Partes eius: memoria, intelligentia, providentia. Memoria est per quam animus repetit illa quae fuerunt; intelligentia, per quam ea perspicit quae sunt; providentia, per quam futurum aliquid videtur ante quam factum est. Iustitia est habitus animi communi utilitate conservata suam cuique tribuens dignitatem. Eius initium est ab natura profectum; deinde quaedam in consuetudinem ex utilitatis ratione venerunt; postea res et ab natura profectas et ab consuetudine probatas legum metus et religio sanxit.”

5 Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 20–27. Delblanc gives several examples of Dalin's use of glory in his educational texts for princes. In a birthday poem for Crown Prince Gustavus in 1755, Dalin uses the figure of Hercules as *exemplum* for the prince, describing the hero's arduous climb up “the Mountain of Honour”, above which lies Olympus: the highest goal for a hero is apotheosis—eternal glory.

Cicero, the idea that the virtuous and the heroic are somehow inseparable started to be questioned and challenged. Different thinkers defined the concepts in different ways, and the discussions on prerequisites and conditions for virtue and glory, alternative combinations of virtues for an ideal monarch or citizen, and the very nature and meaning of the concepts were highly divergent. These discussions were rarely held in strictly academic settings during the late Enlightenment period (see Hellerstedt's chapter), but rather in letters, pamphlets, essays and newspaper articles written in the vernacular, allowing these ideas to pervade closely related arenas such as artistic and political production.

In *L'Encyclopédie*, the article on glory (*Gloire*), Voltaire and Jean-François Marmontel (1723–1799) explain the concept in the following way:

Glory is reputation joined with esteem; it is at its height, when it is joined with admiration. It always presupposes brilliant things, in actions, in virtues, in talents, and always the overcoming of great adversities. Caesar, Alexander have had *glory*. We can hardly say that Socrates has had it; he attracts esteem, veneration, pity, indignation against his enemies; but the term *glory* would be improper for him. His memory is respectable rather than *glorious*. Attila had a lot of brilliance, but not *glory*, because history, which may be wrong, does not grant him any virtues. Charles XII has more *glory*, because his bravery, his disinterestedness, his liberality, were extreme. The success is sufficient for reputation, but not for *glory*. That of Henry IV increases every day, because Time has made known all his virtues, which were incomparably greater than his faults. [—]

*Glory*, as we have said, should be reserved for the ones working together for the public good; [...].<sup>6</sup> [my translation]

6 *L'Encyclopédie*, 1re éd. 1757, s.v. "Gloire, glorieux, glorieusement", 716–721, (Voltaire, Marmontel), accessed March 29, 2015. [http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die/1re\\_%C3%A9dition/GLOIRE,\\_GLORIEUX,\\_GLORIEUSEMENT](http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die/1re_%C3%A9dition/GLOIRE,_GLORIEUX,_GLORIEUSEMENT); In French: "La *gloire* est la réputation jointe à l'estime; elle est au comble, quand l'admiration s'y joint. Elle suppose toujours des choses éclatantes, en actions, en vertus, en talents, & toujours de grandes difficultés surmontées. César, Alexandre ont eu de la *gloire*. On ne peut guère dire que Socrate en ait eu; il attire l'estime, la vénération, la pitié, l'indignation contre ses ennemis; mais le terme de *gloire* seroit impropre à son égard. Sa mémoire est respectable, plutôt que *glorieuse*. Attila eut beaucoup d'éclat; mais il n'a point de *gloire*, parce que l'histoire, qui peut-être se trompe, ne lui donne point de vertus. Charles XII a encore de la *gloire*, parce que sa valeur, son désintéressement, sa libéralité, ont été extrêmes. Les succès suffisent pour la réputation, mais non pas pour la *gloire*. Celle de Henri IV augmente tous les jours, parce que le tems a fait connoître toutes ses vertus, qui étoient incomparablement plus grandes que ses

In many of the conflicting discourses on glory, honour and the heroic of the time, the writers agree on one thing: that the actions of the great man or the hero, in order to be considered good, and warrant glory, must always be directed towards the public good. However, ideas of what virtues prompted people's esteem, what is virtuous, and what is heroic, varied greatly between philosophers. For example, in the *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire and Marmontel accentuate bravery as the mark of a hero worthy of glory, whereas Rousseau in his *Discours* prefers social virtues rather than martial ones:

It is well known that *Augustus's* main trait was not valor. It was not on the shores of Actium nor on the plains at Philippi that he gathered the laurels which immortalized him but, rather, in Rome pacified and made happy. The Universe in submission did less for the glory and security of his life than the equity of his laws and the pardon of *Cinna*; thus the social virtues are preferable to courage even in Heroes!<sup>7</sup>

As in earlier centuries, prudence and fortitude seem to be the two main virtues for discussion, but there is a slight shift in the way they are perceived to be useful for a hero. Rousseau explains:

Assigning the first rank to valor in the Heroic character would be giving the arm that executes higher status than the head that plans. Yet, it is easier to find arms than heads. One can entrust the execution of a great project to others without losing its principal worth; but to execute someone else's project is voluntarily to accept a lower rank that is not suited to the Hero. Thus, whatever the virtue that characterizes it might be, it must indicate genius and be inseparable from it. Heroic qualities do have their seed in the heart, but it is in the head that they develop and acquire solidity. The purest soul can lose its way even on the path of goodness if mind and reason do not guide it, and all virtues are corrupted without the collaboration of wisdom.<sup>8</sup>

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défauts. [...] La gloire, comme nous l'avons dit, doit être réservée aux coopérateurs du bien public; [...]".

7 Kelly, *Rousseau on Philosophy*, 37. In French: "On sait assez que le partage d'Auguste n'étoit pas la valeur. Ce n'est point aux rives d'Actium ni dans les plaines de Philippe qu'il a cueilli les lauriers qui l'ont immortalisé, mais bien dans Rome pacifique et rendue heureuse. L'univers soumis a moins fait pour la gloire et pour la sûreté de sa vie que l'équité de ses lois et le pardon de Cinna: tant les vertus sociales sont, dans les héros mêmes, préférables au courage!"

8 Kelly, *Rousseau on Philosophy*, 38. French text in Rousseau, *Œuvres*, 94: "Assigner le premier rang à la valeur dans le caractère héroïque, ce serait donner au bras qui exécute la préférence sur la tête qui projette. Cependant on trouve plus aisément des bras que des têtes. On peut

Furthermore, Rousseau argues that the virtuous often can be a hindrance for a hero: "The virtuous man is just, prudent, moderate without being a Hero on that account, and too frequently the Hero is none of those things. Let us not be afraid to agree about it: often it is even to the scorn of these virtues that Heroism has owed its brilliance".<sup>9</sup>

The obvious problem for the Enlightenment thinkers was how to reconcile the Christian concepts of *superbia* (pride), *ambitio* (ambition), and *inanis gloria* (vainglory) with the belief that great men could, and should, seek out earthly honour, in line with the Aristotelian ideal. This problem was circumvented in two ways. First, 'low' ambition, fostered in the weak and meek everyday men (women are rarely, if at all, mentioned in these discussions) was distinguished from 'high' ambition, fostered in the human élite. Aristotle already made this distinction, which was later also advocated by Cicero and Seneca.<sup>10</sup> In the *Encyclopédie* it is formulated thus:

Vain *glory* is this little ambition that is content only with appearances, that spreads out in splendid display, & that never rises to great things. One has seen kings who although having had real *glory*, still loved vain *glory*, seeking too much praise, loving too much the apparatus of representation.

The false *glory* is often joined with the vain, but often goes to excess; & the vain is more restricted to pettiness. A prince who will make revenge

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confier à d'autres l'exécution d'un grand projet, sans en perdre le principal mérite; mais exécuter le projet d'autrui, c'est rentrer volontairement dans l'ordre subalterne qui ne convient pas au héros. Ainsi, quelle que soit la vertu qui le caractérise, elle doit annoncer le génie et en être inséparable. Les qualités héroïques ont bien leur germe dans le cœur, mais c'est dans la tête qu'elles se développent et prennent de la solidité. L'ame la plus pure peut s'égarer dans la route même du bien, si l'esprit et la raison ne la guident; et toutes les vertus s'altèrent, sans le concours de la sagesse".

9 Kelly, *Rousseau on Philosophy*, 40. In French: "L'homme vertueux est juste, prudent, modéré, sans être pour tout cela un héros; et trop fréquemment le héros n'est rien de tout cela. Ne craignons point d'en convenir; c'est souvent au mépris même de ces vertus que l'héroïsme a dû son éclat". Rousseau, *Œuvres*, 97.

10 Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 17–29. Delblanc has thoroughly studied the dilemma concerning honour in chapters II and III of his dissertation, and so it will not be reiterated here. Also cf. with my summary of Delblanc's argument in my dissertation *Vivat vår monark! Carl Michael Bellmans panegyrik över Gustaf III 1771–1792*, (diss., Stockholms universitet: Lund, 2011), chapter II.

his issue of honour, seeks false *glory* rather than vain *glory*".<sup>11</sup> [my translation]

Second, the Christian pitfalls were bypassed by focusing on posthumous honour. It was believed that the great man could never be appreciated for his good deeds by his own generation. He is misunderstood and made an object of contempt and deprecation instead of admiration and reverence. His reward will come after this life, when posterity will rehabilitate his reputation and bestow upon him the glory that his contemporaries denied him.<sup>12</sup> A famous passage from a letter from Denis Diderot to the sculptor Étienne Maurice Falconet (1716–1791) on the topic reads:

O holy and sanctified posterity! support for the unfortunate who is oppressed, you who are fair, you who cannot be bribed, who avenges the just and unmask the hypocrite, who pulls down the tyrant; infallible concept, comforting concept, forsake me never. Posterity is to the philosopher what the afterlife is to the religious man.<sup>13</sup> [my translation]

In 1759 in France, a literary genre called the eulogy (*éloge*) was introduced in order to supply good role models for great men in the making. Such a poem was considered a memorial, both to the celebrated man as well as to the poet who commemorated him. Through literature and art, the natural ambition

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11 *L'Encyclopédie*, "Gloire, glorieux, glorieusement", accessed March 29, 2015, [http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die/1re\\_%C3%A9dition/GLOIRE,\\_GLORIEUX,\\_GLORIEUSEMENT](http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die/1re_%C3%A9dition/GLOIRE,_GLORIEUX,_GLORIEUSEMENT).

In French: "La vaine *gloire* est cette petite ambition qui se contente des apparences, qui s'étale dans le grand faste, & qui ne s'élève jamais aux grandes choses. On a vû des souverains qui ayant une *gloire* réelle, ont encore aimé la vaine *gloire*, en recherchant trop les louanges, en aimant trop l'appareil de la représentation. La fausse *gloire* tient souvent à la vaine, mais souvent elle se porte à des excès; & la vaine se renferme plus dans les petitesse. Un prince qui mettra son honneur à se venger, cherchera une *gloire* fausse plutôt qu'une *gloire* vaine".

12 Delblanc, *Ära och minne*, 65–73.

13 In French: "O postérité sainte et sacrée! soutien du malheureux qu'on opprime, toi qui est juste, toi qu'on ne corrompt point, qui venges l'homme de bien, qui démasques l'hypocrite, qui traînes le tyran; idée sure, idée consolante, ne m'abandonne jamais. La postérité pour le philosophe, c'est l'autre monde de l'homme religieux". Denis Diderot, "Lettres a Falconet" in *Mémoires, correspondences et ouvrages inédit de Diderot*, Publiés d'après les manuscrits confiés, en mourant, par l'auteur a Grimm, Tome Troisième (Paris, 1831), 224.



of the great man could be directed to be useful for state and society.<sup>14</sup> This view was famously professed by the French master of eulogy Antoine-Léonard Thomas in his *Essai sur les éloges* from 1773. However, sixty years earlier, this line of thought had already been presented in the British paper, *The Guardian*, by Joseph Addison (1672–1719), who stated that even though earthly ambition is irreconcilable with Christian morality, it does produce similar positive effects. Addison acknowledged that laurel wreaths, medals and other rewards were effective ways of reminding the public of the laudable actions of great men, urging others to follow in their footsteps: “There is no maxim in politics more indisputable than that a nation should have many honours in reserve for those who do national services. This raises emulation, cherishes public merit, and inspires every one with an ambition which promotes the good of his country. The less expensive these honours are to the public, the more still do they turn to its advantage”.<sup>15</sup> Diderot formulated the same idea in the following manner:

But what is the point of erecting monuments to those who no longer exist? to decorate the marble covering their cold ashes with sublime inscriptions; to produce to the citizens busts of the defenders of their liberty; to print in timeless volumes the story of their actions? Is it for the dead that these things are done? No, we turn to the living. We say to them: “If you do the same, these are the honours that await you. You will serve as an example for those who will come after you, just as they once served as examples for those who succeeded them. We will not be more ungrateful to you than to them; despise life, love death.”<sup>16</sup> [my translation].

14 Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 44, 60.

15 Joseph Addison, “The Guardian”, no. 96, Wednesday, July 1, in *The Works of the Right Honourable Addison. With the exception of his numbers of the Spectator. Collected by Mr Tickell. With a complete index. In six volumes*, vol. 1 (New York: William Durell & Co, 1811), 86.

16 In French: “Mais à quoi sert d’élever des monumens à ceux qui ne sont plus? de décorer le marbre qui couvre leurs cendres froides de sublimes inscriptions; de présenter aux citoyens les bustes des défenseurs de leur liberté; de déposer dans des volumes éternels le récit de leurs actions? Est-ce pour les morts que cela se fait? Non, c’est aux vivans qu’on s’adresse. On leur dit: ‘Si tu fais ainsi, voilà les honneurs qui t’attendent. Tu serviras d’exemple à ceux qui te succéderont, comme ils en ont servi à ceux qui leur ont succédé. Nous ne serons pas plus ingrats envers toi qu’envers eux; méprise la vie, aime la mort’”. Diderot, “Lettres a Falconet”, 260. Cf Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 84.

The idea of literature as the main tool for bestowing the honour due to great men was already formulated in antiquity, maybe the most famous example being a line from Horace's Ode III:30: "I have raised a monument more permanent than bronze" ("exegi monumentum aere perennius").<sup>17</sup> The poem was regarded as a monument not only of the great man, but also the poet. During the eighteenth century, this idea was propagated throughout European courts, resting on a string of poets who, during several centuries, had openly demonstrated their power over the posthumous reputation of the rulers—perhaps the most famous one being the Italian Renaissance poet Pietro Aretino, also known as "the scourge of princes" (*flagello dei principi*) who, with the motto 'money or disgrace', virtually blackmailed the sovereigns of his time. In France, these ideas were advanced by philosophers like Joachim Du Bellay, Pierre de Ronsard, Jean de La Fontaine, Jean Racine and others. Gustavus III's own role model, Louis XIV of France, had also to bear such reminders in a number of panegyric poems. In "Au Roi. Ode" by Edmé Boursault (1638–1701) from 1668 it is stated that "[i]t is not always through copper/ That one communicates one's destiny to future generations;/ The trace left by a feather and preserved by a book/ Exceeds the pride of the bronze and the hope of the chisel".<sup>18</sup> The poets tried to convey the notion that the posthumous reputation of the ruler was in the hands of the authors.

Gustavus III himself was highly influenced by the debates on honour and glory. The royal apparatus surrounding panegyrics and the king's glory thus focused on the idea that the king was an owner of *magnanimitas*, incorporating all the necessary virtues, and therefore a great man and an *exemplum*. The poets worked the ideas of the Ciceronian virtues into the praise of the king, in connection with the notion of poetry as mirrors for princes (*principum specula*). Gustavus III, in a speech to the Estates in 1771, confesses to having "a heart burning with the most fervent love of honour, and of the Fatherland" ("ett hjerta brinnande af den lifligaste kärlek för äran och för fäderneslandet").<sup>19</sup>

17 Q. Horatius Flaccus, *The Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), *Carmina*, III:30; p. 278.

18 My translation. French text: "Ce n'est pas toujours sur le cuivre/ Qu'à la race future on transmet son destin;/ Ce que trace une plume et que conserve un livre/ Trompe l'Orgueil du Bronze et l'espoir du Burin". Edmé Boursault, *Lettres nouvelles de feu monsieur Boursault, Tome Troisième*, (Paris: Nicolas Le Breton, 1738), 308.

19 Gustaf III, "TAL till Rikets Ständer på Riksalen, vid Riksdagens början, den 25 Juni 1771", in *Konung Gustaf III:s Skrifter i politiska och vittra ämnen; tillika med dess brefväxling*, vol. 1, Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna (ed.), (Stockholm: Carl Delén, 1806), 75.

There is not much mention of heroic virtue *per se* in panegyric texts from the Gustavian era; however, the heroic and the virtuous are always at the core in the praise of the king. Generally, the poets of the Gustavian era focus their praise on the well-known cardinal virtues. Following the Enlightenment ideal, the king is not just praised for his bravery. Wisdom, sense of justice, and moderation are important virtues, according to the Gustavian poets. By doing so, they conventionally follow the matrices for eulogy of previous centuries.

In judging the cardinal virtues, Rousseau claims that:

Justice then is not the virtue that characterizes the Hero. It will be no more convincing to say that it is temperance or moderation, and it is for lack of the latter virtue that the most famous men have made themselves immortal, and the vice opposed to the former has not prevented any among them from becoming so. [—]

Prudence is more a quality of the mind than a virtue of the soul. But however one envisages it, it is always found to have more solidity than brilliance, and it serves rather to set off the other virtues than to shine on its own. [...]

Besides, the character of Heroism is to carry its own virtues to the highest degree. But nothing is so close to pusillanimity as excessive prudence, and one scarcely rises above men except by sometimes trampling on human reason. Therefore, prudence is also not the characteristic virtue of the Hero. Temperance is even less so, as the trait which Heroism itself, which is nothing other than an intemperate taste of glory, seems to exclude. [...]

If the virtues had to be distributed to those they suit best, I would assign prudence to the Statesman, justice to the Citizen, moderation to the Philosopher. As for strength of soul, I would give it to the Hero, and he would have no reason to complain about his share. [...]

Indeed, strength is the true foundation of Heroism, it is the source or the supplement of the virtues that constitute it, and it is what makes it suitable for great things. Bring together as you will the qualities that can work in concert to make a great man; if you do not add strength to animate them, they all languish and Heroism disappears.

On the contrary, strength of soul alone necessarily confers a great number of Heroic virtues on a person who is endowed with it, and compensates for all the others.<sup>20</sup>

20 Kelly, *Rousseau on Philosophy*, 39–40. In French: “La justice n’est donc pas la vertu qui caractérise le héros. On ne dira pas mieux que ce soit la tempérance ou la modération,

Here, Rousseau uses the term heroic virtues in plural, and that is indeed how it is also phrased in the Swedish debates (*dygder*).<sup>21</sup> That they are heroic seems to be self-evident when dealing with praise of the king during the Gustavian era; and in poetry and orations, the classical virtues are used as a template when describing heroic qualities.

During the Gustavian era, the one virtue a sovereign should possess, apart from the cardinal ones, was clemency (*clementia*). This Gustavian ideal was modeled on conventions stemming both from Greco-Roman rhetorical rules of praise (*laudatio*) and ancient laudatory and moral poetry.<sup>22</sup> The highest virtue of a prince, or a great man, according to Enlightenment humanism, was

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puisque c'est pour avoir manqué de cette dernière vertu que les hommes les plus célèbres se sont rendus immortels, et que le vice opposé à l'autre n'a empêché nul d'entre eux de le devenir [...] La prudence est plutôt une qualité de l'esprit qu'une vertu de l'ame. Mais, de quelque manière qu'on l'envisage, on lui trouve toujours plus de solidité que d'éclat, et elle sert plutôt à faire valoir les autres vertus qu'à briller par elle-même. [...] D'ailleurs le caractère de l'héroïsme est de porter au plus haut degré les vertus qui lui sont propres. Or rien n'approche tant de la pusillanimité qu'une prudence excessive; et l'on ne s'élève guère au-dessus de l'homme qu'en foulant quelquefois aux pieds la raison humaine. La prudence n'est donc point encore la vertu caractéristique du héros. La tempérance l'est encore moins, elle à qui l'héroïsme même, qui n'est qu'une intempérance de gloire, semble donner l'exclusion. [...] S'il falloit distribuer les vertus à ceux à qui elles conviennent le mieux, j'assignerois à l'homme d'état la prudence, au citoyen la justice, au philosophe la modération. Pour la force de l'ame, je la donnerois au héros, et il n'auroit pas à se plaindre de son partage. [...] Voilà ce que produit la force de l'ame; c'est ainsi qu'elle peut éclairer l'esprit, étendre le génie, et donner de l'énergie et de la vigueur à toutes les autres vertus: elle peut même suppléer à celles qui nous manquent; car celui qui ne seroit ni courageux, ni juste, ni sage, ni modéré par inclination, le sera pourtant par raison, sitôt qu'ayant surmonté ses passions et vaincu ses préjugés, il sentira comme il lui est avantageux de l'être, sitôt qu'il sera convaincu qu'il ne peut faire son bonheur qu'en travaillant à celui des autres. La force est donc la vertu qui caractérise l'héroïsme [...]" Rousseau, *Oeuvres*, 96–99.

- 21 In his book on the use of the term virtue in the eighteenth century in Sweden, Bengt Lewan points to the fact that the use of the word virtue (*dygd*) or virtues (*dygder*) is highly inconsistent among Swedish authors throughout the century, and that both its singular form and its plural form could be used to highlight moral qualities, moral deeds, or moral duties. Bengt Lewan, *Med dygd som vapen: Kring begreppet dygd i svensk 1700-talsdebatt* (Stockholm: Symposion, 1985), 11–19.
- 22 See for instance the sentences of Publilius Syrus (First century BCE). Many of them deal with forgiveness and clemency. E.g., "By forgiving much the mighty becomes even mightier" ("Multa ignoscendo fit potens potentior") and "He who shows clemency will be a victor forever" ("Perpetuo vincit, qui utitur clementia"). *Publili Syri Sententiae*, R.A.H. Bickford-Smith (ed.), (London: C.J. Clay, 1895), 23, line 42/384, and 32, line 51/539.

clemency. Gustavus III became renowned for his clemency all over Europe, having carried out a *coup d'état* to reclaim autocracy as king in 1771 completely without bloodshed. In Voltaire's *La Henriade*, this particular virtue is summed up in the motto 'conquer and forgive' (*vaincre et pardonner*).<sup>23</sup> The king's clemency was seen as truly heroic, and is often mentioned in laudatory verses by the most prolific Swedish panegyric poets of the time: Carl Michael Bellman (1740–1795) and Carl Gustaf af Leopold (1756–1829).

A few representative examples of this are provided by the panegyric verses by Bellman. In 1777, he wrote a New Year's poem dedicated to the king. In this, he conjures a personification of Sweden, asking her to praise Providence who has blessed the country with a merciful and compassionate king—a king, Bellman writes, whose “mild scepter” is foremost amongst kings.<sup>24</sup> That same year, Bellman wrote a royalist ditty in honour of the king's name day, where his mild character is reflected even in legislation: “Farewell duress!/ Gustavus's clemency makes the laws”.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, in a comprehensive eulogy on the king's birthday in 1783, Bellman describes Gustavus III's heroic deed of carrying out a *coup d'état* without bloodshed, and points to the fact that his clemency is inherited from his royal predecessors; “Your ancestral clemency, crowned, knew how to quell Revenge;/ Not e'en a droplet of blood stained your spire/ On that precarious occasion”.<sup>26</sup>

Bellman belongs to the poets laureate of the time who most often refer to clemency as one of the king's most notable virtues. Another noteworthy

23 This motto occurs in several parts of this book, most notably in the Introduction, and in Song Nine. See *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire, avec des notes et une notice historique sur la vie de Voltaire*, Tome II: Théâtre. *La Henriade*. La pucelle. Poésies (Paris, 1835) 330.

24 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter*. Standardupplaga utgiven av Bellmanssällskapet, VII: Dikter till Gustaf III och konungahuset (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1938), 32. “Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk”, Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n43/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n43/mode/2up).

For the purpose of simplifying for the reader, I have chosen to paraphrase or loosely translate the Swedish poems into English, and for the purpose of easy access for those who read Swedish, I will henceforth in the footnote also supply the link to online editions in original Swedish, which, in the case of both Carl Michael Bellman and Carl Gustaf af Leopold, are scanned copies of the published volumes.

25 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 36. “Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk”, Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n47/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n47/mode/2up).

26 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 75. “Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk”, Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n85/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n85/mode/2up).

example is a line in the well-loved Fredman's Song no 64, "O'er the misty park of Haga" ("Fjäriln vingad syns på Haga"), where the narrator of the poem "is greeted by a mild monarch".<sup>27</sup> Gustavus III is represented as a hero for not shedding blood and resorting to violence. He is a wise father protecting his children, and a virtuous example through his lenient legislation. Among his many reforms, Gustavus III became known for alleviating the conditions for lowly servants (*tjänstehjon*), abolishing the death penalty for female infanticides, and allowing freedom of religion for Jews and Catholics.<sup>28</sup>

Even Gustavus III himself, in his plays about the great warrior king Gustavus Adolphus (1594–1692), accentuates mercy and clemency in the king's actions. In one scene in the play *The Magnanimity of Gustavus Adolphus* (*Gustaf Adolfs ädelmod*), peasants praise the monarch in a song containing the line: "Never, never before his equal/ In mercy and in clemency be known" ("Aldrig, aldrig förr hans like/Man i nåd och mildhet såg").<sup>29</sup>

Gustavus III was the last of the Swedish warrior kings, although history revision effectively has made him more famous for his cultural feats than his martial ones. Nevertheless, during his reign in the 1780s and 1790s, Sweden was at war with Russia, which led to a veritable blitz of patriotic and royalist poems. Even though the king's ambition to win glory on the battlefield was considered natural—and, by most, praiseworthy—there was also strong opposition to this war. The poets laureate who objected to the war were swift to use panegyric verse as means of educating the king, and trying to sway his ambitions in another direction. The heroic and the virtuous, it was argued in those instances, lie in the proper use of *prudentia*, in the form of wisdom and foresight, and in knowing what is best for the people. Some even stated that all the greatness of the king, which was demonstrated during the revolution in 1771 when he did not resort to murder and mayhem as other, non-enlightened sovereigns might have done, would be lost to posterity if his ambition now caused the death of good Swedish men.

During the preparations for the war in 1786, the poet laureate of the time, Carl Gustaf af Leopold, wrote a lengthy poem describing the realities of war,

27 Paul Britten Austin, *Fredman's Epistles and Songs. With a short introduction*, Unesco Collection of Representative Books (Stockholm: Proprius, 1999), 183.

28 Erik Lönnroth, *Den stora rollen: Kung Gustaf III spelad av honom själv*, Svenska Akademiens handlingar från år 1986, Svenska Akademien 200 år, andra korrigerade upplagan (Stockholm: Svenska Akademien, 1986), 58, 79.

29 Gustaf III, "Gustaf Adolfs Ädelmod," in *Konung Gustaf III:s Skrifter i politiska och vittra ämnen; tillika med dess brevexling*, part 3, Johan Gabriel Oxenstierna (ed.) (Stockholm: Carl Delén, 1807), 186.

claiming that even if the king is a hero by birth and bloodline, he is by no means protected from bullets. The poet argues that if the king should die on the battlefield, the country would be in dire straits indeed, and he goes on to plead to the king to follow his predecessors in mind and spirit, but not in action: the same audacious blood that has given rise to culture and the arts, will bring death and destruction to good Swedish men and even the king himself, if his dauntless and enterprising spirit is fueled by vain bravery.<sup>30</sup>

During the war with Russia in 1788, Leopold wrote other similarly critical verses, wherein he renounces the short-term profits of the king simply imitating the martial feats of his predecessors, and argues instead that being loved as a father by his people—as he was after the bloodless revolution—is far more laudable than being feared by nations.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from these poems that Leopold tried to manipulate the monarch towards pacifism; during the Gustavian Era, *iustitia* and *prudencia* were virtues that awarded the highest admiration and praise, much more so than *fortitudo*. Of course, when victory was announced, even Leopold lauded the king's courage and bravery, and his just war against the enemy. The line of argument in Leopold's poems echoes—perhaps unintentionally—the words of Rousseau and the pacifist trait prominent within Enlightenment discourse:

The brave man shows his worth only in battle; the true hero shows it every day, and his virtues—though they are sometimes displayed in pomp—are no less often put into use under a more modest character.

Let us dare to say it. Valor is so far from being the prime virtue of the Hero, that it is doubtful whether it should even be counted among the virtues. How could one honor by this name a quality on which so many scoundrels have based their crimes? [—]

Therefore let us no longer be told that the palm of Heroism belongs only to valor and military talents. The reputation of great men is not measured by their exploits.<sup>32</sup>

30 "Till Konungen på Ladugårds-gärdet 1786," in *Carl Gustaf af Leopold, Samlade skrifter av Carl Gustaf af Leopold. Förra avdelningen. Andra delen. Dikter 1785–1829. 1. Text*, Torkel Stålmarck (ed.), (Stockholm: Svenska Vitterhetssamfundet, 2002), 51. "Litteraturbanken", accessed March 29, 2015, [http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter1\\_2\\_1/sida/51/faksimil](http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter1_2_1/sida/51/faksimil).

31 "Till Konungen, i Göteborg," *Carl Gustaf af Leopold, Samlade skrifter* 2002, 111. "Litteraturbanken", accessed March 29, 2015, [http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter1\\_2\\_1/sida/111/faksimil](http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter1_2_1/sida/111/faksimil).

32 Kelly, *Rousseau on Philosophy*, 35–36. In French: "Le brave ne fait ses preuves qu'aux jours de la bataille: le vrai héros fait les siennes tous les jours; et ses vertus, pour se montrer



As in previous centuries, Gustavian panegyric verse stressed the royal bloodline as a warrant for the present ruler's virtues. Gustavus III is in almost all panegyric verse hailed as a hero—primarily in his own right because of his merciful and benevolent revolution—but also for possessing the virtues of his predecessors, the other two great Gustavians: Gustavus Vasa and Gustavus Adolphus.

During the eighteenth century, the notion stemming from antiquity that the past and the present, and sometimes even the future, were linked together through bloodlines of great men, was in full use. Examples of this line of thought are found in abundance in Roman poetry, a notable case in point being Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*. In this ode, formulated as a prayer to Apollo and Diana, the virtues and deeds of Augustus are listed. In it the emperor is referred to as "the noble blood of Anchises and Venus" ("clarus Anchisae Venerisque sanguis").<sup>33</sup>

After Gustavus III's *coup d'état* in 1772, the poets were soon to use this motif of the ruler as the heir of a glorious past. However, as early as 1771, when Gustavus III rode into Stockholm as the new king of Sweden after the death of his father, Bellman makes use of the virtuous bloodline argument in his celebratory poem "Dear Brothers, let us toast for Gustavus" ("Käre bröder, drickom Gustafs skål"), in which Bellman relates the feats of both Gustavus Vasa, who fought and conquered the 'tyrant' Christian II of Denmark, and Gustavus Adolphus, who won considerable victories within the Protestant cause, asking heaven to make Gustavus III just as great as his predecessors.<sup>34</sup>

In another political poem from this same year, when the king tried to unite the opposing political parties on his return, Bellman wrote a short poem commenting on the king's efforts to bring harmony to the country by highlighting Gustavus III's wisdom. Here, the monarch is portrayed as a traditional father of his country, as well as the biblical king Solomon, a common epithet for

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quelques fois en pompe, n'en sont pas d'un usage moins fréquent sous un extérieur plus modeste. Osons le dire. Tant s'en faut que la valeur soit la première vertu du héros, qu'il est douteux même qu'on la doive compter au nombre des vertus. Comment pourroit-on honorer de ce titre une qualité sur laquelle tant de scélérats ont fondé leurs crimes ? [—] Qu'on ne nous dise donc plus que la palme héroïque n'appartient qu'à la valeur et aux talents militaires. Ce n'est point sur les exploits des grands hommes que leur réputation est mesurée". Rousseau, *Œuvres*, 36, 92.

33 Q. Horatius Flaccus, *The Odes and Epodes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), *Carmen Saeculare*, v. 50; p. 354.

34 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 8. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n19/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n19/mode/2up).

rulers since the Renaissance.<sup>35</sup> Justice, prudence and wisdom are the virtues celebrated here.

In yet another poem written by Bellman during the political deliberations of the Estates in 1771, the bloodline between Gustavus III and Gustavus Vasa is highlighted by emphasizing the lineage through blood, and suggesting that if you love Gustavus Vasa and what he represents, you will also love his descendant, Gustavus III.<sup>36</sup> For Bellman's contemporaries, the line of thought was clear: the third Gustavus merited the same amount of admiration and glory as the first one, based on the ever-important genealogical connection through blood.

Bellman also wrote an occasional poem for the unveiling of the statue of Gustavus Vasa by Pierre L'Archevêques (1724–1778) at the Square of the House of Knights (*Riddarhustorget*) on Midsummer's Day in Stockholm in 1774. The day had important historical connections: it was on the same day Gustavus Vasa had made his grand entrance into the capital in 1523 after the capture of Stockholm in the war against the Danes, and it was also the day of Adolf Frederick's accession to the throne in 1751. The stanzas have been arranged so that the connections between Gustavus Vasa and Gustavus III are made evident. The poet claims that the Swedish annals bear witness to the *magnanimitas* of Gustavus Vasa, and that the same virtues appear in the third Gustavus, who at his death will merit the same glory as his namesake and forerunner.<sup>37</sup> The two monarchs are described as noble, magnanimous, virtuous and worthy of esteem and glory. In the second stanza, the bloodline is described as the designated carrier of the innate virtues of Gustavus III.<sup>38</sup>

A final example of this recurrent line of argument in Gustavian eulogy is the song by Bellman that was to become Sweden's first (unofficial) national anthem. Conceived sometime during 1771 or 1772, this song was sung by

35 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 9. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n19/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n19/mode/2up).

36 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 10. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n21/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n21/mode/2up).

37 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 23. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n33/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n33/mode/2up).

38 *Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter* VII, 23. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n33/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n33/mode/2up); Cf. Nell, *Vivat vår monark*, 72–84.

Bellman and the military officers on the evening of the *coup d'état* on 19 August 1772. In the song's second stanza, the king is praised for his wisdom and righteousness, virtues passed on through the Gustavian blood line: the Vasa line, Bellman writes, has always strived to do right.<sup>39</sup>

This song, together with many other panegyric verses from this time, manifests the belief in the importance of the royal bloodline as a conveyer of virtue and magnanimity. At the same time, this song, along with many of the others quoted, also focusses on accomplishments. The ruler's magnanimity is worthy of glory and praise and is shown in his actions. It is all well and fine to be the carrier of innate virtues, but if these virtues cannot also be connected with the actual deeds of the celebrated man, they are near worthless.

During the late Enlightenment, the idea of doing good things for others is all the more important in the discussions of honour and virtue and is rated higher than to simply be good. Voltaire formulated the idea in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764) as follows:

If you are just, you have said it all; your strength, your prudence, your temperance, are useful qualities. If you have them, so much the better for you; but if you are just, so much the better for the others. But it is not enough to be just, you must do good; that is what is truly cardinal. [...]

When it comes to charity, is this not what the Greeks and the Romans understood by humanity, the love of your neighbor? This love is nothing if it is not active; therefore, doing good is the sole true virtue.<sup>40</sup> [my translation]

Active justice and clemency are consequently the favoured virtues in the panegyrics of the time. Fortitude is still praiseworthy, but according to Leopold, it ranks far beneath the other two. In fact, it could even be a hindrance for the other virtues. In one poem, the poet all but vituperates the king for going to

39 Carl Michael Bellmans skrifter VII, 14. "Carl Michael Bellmans Samlade Verk", Bellmanssällskapet, accessed March 29, 2015, [http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book\\_online/7#page/n25/mode/2up](http://www.samladeverk.bellman.org/index.php/bookreader/book_online/7#page/n25/mode/2up).

40 In French: "Si tu es juste, tu as tout dit; ta force, ta prudence, ta tempérance, sont des qualités utiles. Si tu les as, tant mieux pour toi; mais si tu es juste, tant mieux pour les autres. Ce n'est pas encore assez d'être juste, il faut être bienfaisant: voilà ce qui est véritablement cardinal. [...] Pour la charité, n'est-ce pas ce que les Grecs et les Romains entendaient par humanité, amour du prochain? Cet amour n'est rien s'il n'est agissant: la bienfaisance est donc la seule vraie vertu". *Oeuvres Complètes de Voltaire. Dictionnaire Philosophique*, Tome VIII, (Paris: Furne, 1835), 293.

war. Once, Leopold writes, Gustavus was the wisest and most lovable king in Europe, pursuing peace and the arts, earning the laurels of Apollo. Now, his taste has changed, and he strives for honour and glory on the battlefield. The muses have fled his side, and Bellona is the one awarding the laurel wreaths. The king is blinded by martial glory, and unaware of the bloodshed: "The Clement Gustavus, is merely the brave Gustavus" ("Den Milde Gustaf, är den tappre Gustaf blott").<sup>41</sup>

During the reign of Gustavus III, nothing warranted as much praise, and as much spontaneous praise, as his clemency during the revolution. Even though the king himself commanded the poets to write patriotic poetry during the war with Russia, it does not seem to equal the praise for his peaceful activities.<sup>42</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the traditional templates for laudatory poetry rested on traditional definitions of virtue, glory and the heroic, even though the concept of heroic virtue *per se* is hardly mentioned in Swedish laudatory poetry of the time. During the Gustavian era, Swedish poets rediscovered their power as educators of princes and the didactic aspect of occasional poetry served as the backbone and was used as a political tool to try to sway the ruler in the desired direction. At the same time, Swedish men of letters were heavily influenced by the French Physiocratic movement, and the Enlightenment's penchant for equality, resulting in the aforementioned "democratization of honour". In Sweden, the writings of Physiocrat Marquis de Mirabeau (1715–1789), and especially his *L'ami des homes*, was translated into Swedish by the statesman Carl Fredrik Scheffer and popularized by author Johan Fischerström (1735–1796), which contributed to the idealization of the peasant and of country life. The citizen came into focus in a new way in Sweden, and this resulted in serious discussions concerning a (never realized) Pantheon in Stockholm, containing busts and statues of burghers, middle estate officials, and peasants, so that all social classes could have prominent *exempla* to follow.<sup>43</sup> Human virtues regardless of social class became a subject matter for popular education.

The debates concerning virtue in concordance with Natural Law and equality during the late Enlightenment in general and Gustavian Enlightenment in particular, seem to have led to a dispersion of the concept heroic virtue as a whole. Instead, it reassembled in the wake of the French Revolution as an

41 Carl Gustaf af Leopold, "Till Gustaf III" in *Samlade skrifter af Carl Gustaf af Leopold: Senare afdelningen, första delen, Bref 1774–1789*, Knut Fredlund (ed.), (Stockholm, 1911), 283. Online version "Litteraturbanken", accessed March 29, 2015, [http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter2\\_1/sida/283/faksimil](http://litteraturbanken.se/#!/forfattare/LeopoldCG/titlar/SamladeSkrifter2_1/sida/283/faksimil).

42 This requires further study.

43 Delblanc, *Åra och minne*, 113–116.

eclectic blend of many different facets of the world of ideas defining the late Enlightenment period.

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